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Licens'd,

*November 1. 1689.*

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REFLECTIONS  
UPON THE  
CONDUCT  
O F

**Human Life:**

With reference to the Study of  
*Learning and Knowledge.*

In a Letter to the Excellent  
Lady, the Lady *Masham.*

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By *JOHN NORRIS*, M. A.  
and late Fellow of *All-Souls-College*  
in *Oxford.*

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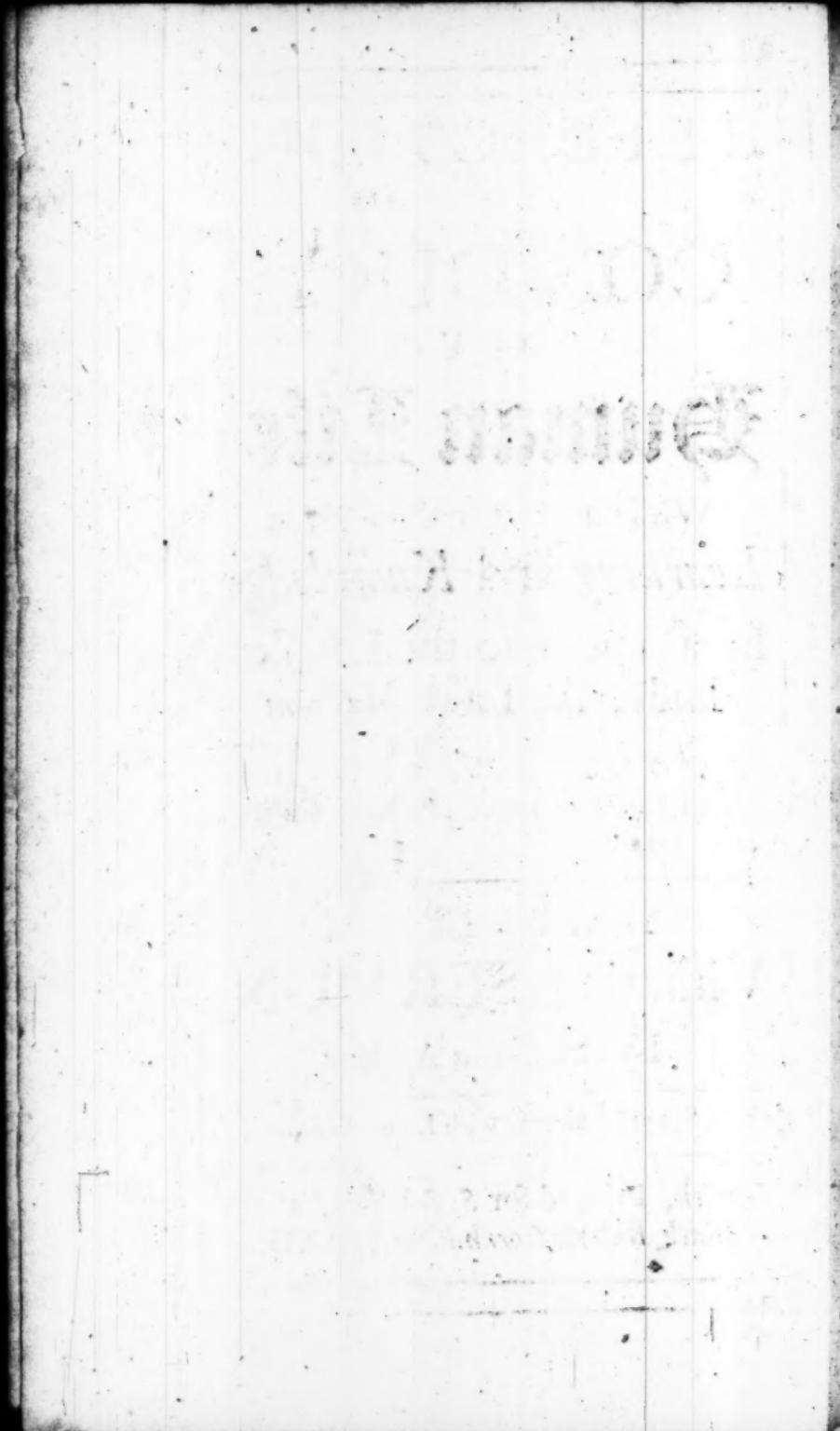
To which is annex'd, a  
**Visitation SERMON,**  
By the same Author.

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MADAM,

**S**INCE the great Happiness or Misery of Human Life depends wholly upon the right or wrong Conduct of it, he that shall point out any of its Irregularities or Mistakes, ought to be lookt upon as an Universal Friend, and a Promoter of the Public Happiness: And the more severe he is in his Censure (provided it be true and well-grounded) the more charitable is he in his Undertaking, and the more likely to be serviceable in his Performance.

But then especially will he be so, if the Irregularities which  
A 3 be

be singles out be such, as are not only Great and of ill Consequence, Popular and Frequent, Inveterate and of long standing; but such as lie secret and unobserved, and have all along passed under the Notion and Character of Excellencies; and been made rather matter of particular Commendation than of Disparagement. If the Light that is in thee be Darkness, said our Blessed Lord, how great is that Darknes! And so may I say, If those things that go for great Excellencies are real Faults, how great are such Faults, and how worthy to be censured! He therefore that reflects upon such Misconducts as these, does a double piece of Service, and obliges by his Discovery as well as by his Reproof.

This

This Consideration, Madam,  
has engaged my present Censure  
upon that side of Human Life  
which respects the Study of Learn-  
ing and Knowledge, the greatest  
Faults of which (if I mistake  
not) have been, and are still, by  
a kind of unaccountable Supersti-  
tion, Canoniz'd for Vertues; and  
tho' really neither fewer nor less  
enormous than those of the Moral  
Part, yet have been so little Dis-  
cern'd or Consider'd, or at least  
Animadverted upon, that a Cen-  
sure of this Nature looks like a sort  
of a Desideratum in the Learn-  
ed World, and such as even for  
the Singularity of it ought no  
longer to be Omitted.

The Truth is, the Faults of  
the Intellectual Way have this pe-  
culiar

culiar in them, that they are not so liable to be Discover'd. That Light which divulges other Mis-  
carriages, will be sure to hide these: For besides that they are visible only to a few, like the private Slips of a Religious Con-  
vent, known only to those of the same Order; (for none can judge of the Faults of the Learned without Learning) I say besides this, those few that do discern them, have yet seldom Ingenuity enough to confess and acknowledg them. For either they are so Proud as not to be willing to own themselves to have been so long under a Mistake; or else so Ill-natured that they don't care others should be directed to a better way than they themselves have travell'd in, but will have Posterity trudge on

on in the same dirty miry Road  
after their Forefathers.

How far I am from this narrow and illiberal Temper of Soul the following Reflections may give Evidence, in which according to that measure of Understanding God has given me, I have endeavour'd to mark out some of the grosser and less observ'd Misconducts of Human Life in reference to the Study of Learning and Knowledge, wherewith I myself have been too much and too long imposed upon, and which after all my Conviction, (so invincible are the Impressions of an early Prejudice) I can hardly yet find power to correct: For Education is the great Bias of Human Life, and there is this double Witch-craft

in

in it, that 'tis a long time before  
a Man can see any thing amiss in  
a way which he has been used to,  
and when he does, 'tis not very easie  
after that to change it for a better.

What Success these Reflections  
may have towards the Reforming  
the Abuses here toucht upon, is be-  
yond the reach of my eye-sight to  
presage. I am satisfied that they  
carry Reason and Evidence enough  
with them to stand their ground  
against any Opposite Reason that  
may be offer'd against them; but  
whether this will make them an  
equal Match for Authority and  
contrary Prescription, is not so cer-  
tain. But let the Event be what it  
will, here I fancy will lie the  
Contest, between Reason on one  
side, and Education and Autho-  
rity

ity on the other. Now which of these will prevail, I know not: But I know which should.

In the meanwhile how some of the rigid Votaries and Professors of Old Learning will relish these Reflections, I can more easily Divine. These are such Bigots in their way, that a Man were as good go to convert the Jews as to reason with any of these stiff-necked Gentlemen. I do not therefore expect to convince many of these. For tho Reason may do great things, yet it can never work Miracles. And a Man may as soon put the Sun out of the Ecliptic, or the Rivers out of their Courses, as turn these Men out of their Way. They are Conjured into a Circle, and nothing less

less than a more powerful Magic  
can ever get them out.

I do not therefore expect, I  
say, to do great Cures upon the  
Men of this Complexion, or to mer-  
it any Thanks from them. 'Tis  
well if I do not provoke them, and  
make them Angry with me for tel-  
ling out of School. But if I  
happen to bring over here and there  
an ingenuous and uninslaved Spi-  
rit, some of those who are not  
suck'd in too far within the common  
Vortex of the World, I shall not  
think my Labour ill bestow'd, nor  
much regard the Magisterial Cen-  
sures of those State-sowr-Stu-  
dents, whose great and long Study  
has had no better effect upon them,  
but only to make them too wise for  
Conviction.

I do not take your Ladyship to be concern'd but only in the last of these Reflections. The two former may give you Entertainment, but they are not intended for your Instruction. Your Ladyship is not to learn either the Object, or the Method of Study, but only to be slackned in your Vehement Prosecution of it. You take the right Path, but you run too fast in it, and are therefore desired to moderate your Pace, not only for fear you should outstrip us, but lest you should grow too wise for your Self, and for the World you live in, and to your own great cost find that weighty Reflection of the Wise Man to be true, which you were better take upon his Authority, that in much Wisdom is much

much Grief, and that he that  
increases Knowledge, increases  
Sorrow.

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The

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## The First Reflection.

Wherein the general Conduct of Human Life is tax'd, for placing Learning and Knowledge, in such things as are little or nothing perfective of the Understanding.

### I.

BEING Naturally more than ordinarily disposed to Thoughtfulness, and from the circumstances of my present Solitude and Retirement further invited to it; I began one day to fall into a deep Meditation upon the Conduct of *my own*, and of *Human Life*. What Reflections I made upon my

my *own*, are too peculiarly Calculated for my proper Circumstances, to be of any General use, and therefore I shall not trouble you with them. But as for those past upon the Conduct of *Human Life*, I think they are of too general use, and withal of too Weighty Consequence, not to be Communicated. These therefore I shall think worth while to draw up into a little more orderly form than wherein they were first conceived, and present to your *Ladyship's* Consideration.

## II.

First then I consider that the Conduct of Human Life must be to the *End of Human Life*, which is the same with the End of *Man*, which is *Happiness*. This Conduct therefore must be, and necessarily is, in *Gross* to *Happiness*. But now whereas there are two Faculties or Powers of *Man*, by the right ordering of which this Happiness is to be attain'd, *Under-standing*

standing and *Will*, therefore more immediately and distinctly, this Conduct of Human Life is in order to the Government and Exercise of these two Faculties, the due Regulation of which is the *Immediate End*, to which Human Life is to be Conducted. There is therefore a double Conduct of Human Life, *Intellectual* and *Moral*.

## III.

As to the *Moral Conduct* of Human Life, I do not intend at present to spend any Reflections upon it. Not because 'tis Unexceptionable, but because 'tis too Obnoxious, the general Impertinence and Irregularity of it being too open and exposed, to need any. And besides 'tis a *Butt*, that has been shot at so often, ever since *Preaching* and *Writing* has been in the World, that 'tis now so thick-set with holes, that there is scarce room left to fasten a *new Arrow* in it.

## I V.

But tho the *Moral Conduct* of Human Life stands so much in the way, and has been so much reflected upon, yet it has fared otherwise with that which is here call'd *Intellectual*, which stands not so fair a *Mark*, nor has been so often hit. Not that 'tis really less faulty (for perhaps we shall be found to be as much out in the *Conduct* of our *Understandings* as in that of our *Wills*) but because its faultiness is less *notorious*, and lies further in, and must be drawn forth into View by a Chain of Consequences, which not over many have either *discernment* enough no *make*, or *Patience* enough to attend to.

## V.

This is the Reason why *this* part of Human Conduct has hitherto scaped so well the Censure and Animadversion not only of the vulgar, but of the Masters of Reason, who have generally emptied

emptied their Quivers upon the Moral part; and this is the Reason why I am not willing it should escape now. And I think a good Reason too, since next to the Greatness of an Irregularity, nothing renders it so fit for Reflection, as its *Privacy* and *Retirement*.

## V I.

The Subject therefore of the present Reflections, is the *Intellectual Conduct* of Human Life, or as I express it in the Title, the *Conduct of Human Life*, with reference to the Study of Learning and Knowledge. It is here supposed that this Conduct is *faulty* and *irregular*, in its being made the Subject of *Reflection*. What its Faults and Irregularities are, I shall shew, by ranging them into these three Orders, with reference to the *End*, *Means* and *Degree* of *Affection*.

I. The placing of Learning and Knowledge in such things as are little or nothing Perfective of the Understanding. B 2 a.

2. The undue and irregular method of prosecuting what is really Perfective of it.

3. The too Importunate and over-earnest pursuit after Knowledge in General.

These are the three *Cardinal Irregularities* I have observ'd in the Intellectual Conduct of Human Life, and upon each of these I shall bestow a *Reflection*.

### VII.

The business of this first Reflection shall be, to Tax the General Conduct of Human Life, for placing Learning and Knowledge, in such things as are little or nothing Perfective of the Understanding. This I confess to be a Charge of more than ordinary Severity and Boldness; because it fastens an Imputation of Folly upon the *Learned Order* (for with them only is my present Concern) and not only so, but also in that very thing wherein they think their Wisdom and Intellectual accomplishment

complishment consists, and upon which they value themselves above the rest of Mankind. To question their conduct in any thing else, would be but a trivial Charge, and such as they would not only readily *Pardon*, but *Acknowledge* ; it being a common thing with Learned Men not only to *own*, but studiously to *affect* Ignorance in things besides their Profession, as in Secular business, the common Affairs of Life, the Mysteries of Trades and the like. But to censure them as defective in that one thing they pretend to, to make that their *Blind Side*, where they think they see clearest ; to maintain that they are not only not really wise and knowing, but that generally they don't so much as know what true Knowledge is, and that they generally place it in such things as contribute little or nothing to the perfection of that, whereby they *really excel* the *Brunes*, and

would be *thought* to excel the *Common sort of Men*; this is so high, and so disobliging a charge, that I fear those who from the force of what shall be here urg'd, may be *convinc'd* of the *Truth* of it, will hardly *forgive* the *Boldness* of it.

## VIII.

But as high a charge as it is, I question not but that it may be, and will be here made good. And that it may appear to be true, we will first of all by way of *Address* or *Preparation*, consider what antecedent grounds of probability there *are*, that Men should generally place Learning and Knowledge in such things as are little or nothing perfective of the *rational Part*; and then in the second place we will proceed directly to prove that they do so.

## IX.

As to the first, your *Ladyship* cannot be so little acquainted either with *hidden Springs*, or *outward Workings* of Human Nature

as not to have observ'd that how-ever strong and universal is the de-sire of Knowledge, yet Men are generally more in Love with the *Fame* and *Reputation* of it, than with the *thing* it self. There are indeed here and there a few *humble* *retired* Souls that are otherwise dis-pos'd, and like your *Ladyship*, are so far from loving the *Fame* and *Credit* of Knowledge *before* Knowledge it self, that they don't love it at *all*, but are content to court *Wisdom* privately, and enjoy their own *Light* in the *Dark*. " For it " may be they consider, that be " their Attainments what they " will, *Fame* is a thing of infinite " uncertainty and contingency, " that it depends more upon the " Humours of Men, or some more " secret unaccountable *Fate*, than " upon real excellency and merit; " that some have the luck to be " popular, and cry'd up for no- " thing, when in the mean while " others that are really and highly

" deserving can scarce keep their  
 " Heads above *Contempt* ; that the  
 " World is seldom just to true  
 " Merit, and that nothing is  
 " weigh'd in a falser Ballance than  
 " real Excellency, whether Moral  
 " or Intellectual ; and that there  
 " is little reason to expect it should  
 " ever be otherwise as long as *En-*  
 " *vy* and *Ignorance* hold the *Scales*.  
 " Then again it may be they con-  
 " sider with themselves, that sup-  
 " pose true Worth were secure of  
 " Reputation, yet what a poor  
 " slender good is it ! For what  
 " is it to be *talk'd of*, or *pointed*  
 " *at* ? Should a Man be never so  
 " Popular, the *Antipodes* will never  
 " hear of him ; or if they do,  
 " what is he the *better* for what is  
 " said of him *there* ? And should  
 " his Fame, like the Sun, Travail  
 " round the whole Globe, besides  
 " that he is but Master of a Point  
 " when he has All, he can enjoy  
 " no more of it but just what he  
 " bears, which is inconsiderable.  
 " And

“ And yet as inconsiderable as it  
“ is, 'tis like to be his whole Porti-  
“ on. For as for *Posthumous Glory*,  
“ it comes too late to be any  
“ thing valuable. He will either  
“ not be sensible of it, or despise  
“ it. For certainly it must needs  
“ be mightily beneath the im-  
“ provements of a separate state  
“ to put any value upon the in-  
“ judicious praises of poor Mortals  
“ here below. Or suppose that a  
“ Deceas'd Spirit could take any  
“ Delight in reflecting upon the  
“ Fame he has left behind him,  
“ yet 'tis to be considered that *the*  
“ *Fashion of this World pases away*,  
“ that those in whose Praises he  
“ outlives himself, must also shortly  
“ dye, and that then his *Fame* will  
“ have a Funeral, as well as *him-*  
“ *self*. These perhaps, or such like  
Considerations, may prevail with  
your *Ladyship* and a few more  
*thinking Persons*, to have but a  
very cold and indifferent regard  
for the Reputation of Learning  
and

and Knowledge: But as for the generality of Mankind, it must be own'd that they are fond of it to a strange degree, and are more concern'd to be accounted Wise and Learned, than really to be so. Otherwise I question whether our *Libraries* would be so full as they are.

## X.

But now, tho the generality of men be so passionately and keenly set upon the *fame* of being Learned and Knowing, yet (so little hath Nature design'd to gratify this ambitious Humour) there are but a very few that have either a Genius and Inclination for *Learning it self*, or a Capacity of attaining to it. Not an *Inclination*, because there is a great Variety in the *Speculative*, as well as *Moral Inclinations* of Men, one being naturally disposed to this sort of Study, and another to that; whereas true Knowledge, whatever it be (which shall be consider'd in its due place) is

is of one *determinate* kind or nature in general, and consequently must require a certain peculiar frame and disposition of mind. Not a *Capacity*, because the generality of Men are known to have but indifferent Intellectuals, suited to the exigencies of *common Life*, when as true Knowledge (whatever it be) must be supposed to be a thing of uncommon difficulty, and the study of it a Work fit only for sublimer Wits, the more elevated and *Awaken'd* part of Mankind.

## X I.

Now put these two things together, that almost all men would fain be thought Learned and Knowing, and that there is but here and there one that is naturally made and fitted for true Knowledge, and then consider what is like to be the result of this Complication. Why, the Latter. Few may succeed well in the search of what they were naturally qualified for, and having attain'd to a

Com-

Competency of true Knowledge, such as is perfective of the Understanding, they find themselves under no *Temptation* to place it in any thing else, or to bring into Credit any other sort of Knowledge. Because having arrived so far, they are either wise enough to *undervalue* the Fame of being Learned, or else despair not of attaining it by their Proficiency in *True Knowledge*. Here therefore they take up their rest.

### XII.

But now what shall we do with the *others*? Are they to be perswaded that they are not of a *Make* for the Study and attainment of Learning? You'll find it tough Work to convince them of that. But suppose it possible that they could be made sensible that they are not like to Commence very Learned and Knowing, yet all the World shall never be able to perswade them to lay aside that Natural Itch of being

dge, so accounted. But you'll say, tho  
 Un. this Inclination be too Natural  
 selves and Inbred to be quite *laid aside*,  
 it is yet there's hopes it may be *Go-*  
*into vern'd*. No, nor that neither. They  
 now. must put in for the *Prize*, and 'tis  
 so in vain to dissuade them from it.  
 though But they must despair of ever  
 being winning it in a *fair* way, being  
 supposed not able to reach the  
 Tree of Knowledge. True, They  
 fore have therefore but one way left,  
 and that is, *to turn the Tables*,  
 and cry up something or other for  
 Learning which they are capable  
 of. No matter whether it *deserve*  
 that Name, that is, whether it be  
 really perfective of the Rational  
 Part or no, 'tis enough if they can  
*reach* it. For those that can't com-  
 pass *true* Riches, and yet will have  
 the *Name* and *Credit* of it, are put  
 upon the Necessity of *Coyning* and  
*Counterfeiting*.

### XIII.

And truly this Supposition  
 seems to me so very reasonable,  
that

that were Experience altogether *Silent* in the Case, and were I utterly unacquainted with the state of Learning in the World, yet if I had a Draught given me of Human Nature, and were told how much the Ambition of being esteem'd as Learned and Knowing, exceeds both the *Desire* and the *Ability* to be so, and were then ask'd what I thought would be the Intellectual Conduct of Human Life, I should without any further enquiry conclude, that in all probability Men would generally place Learning and Knowledge in such things as signifie little or nothing to the Perfection of the Understanding.

#### XIV.

But from grounds of Probability that they should do so, let us proceed to prove *directly* that they do so. Now in this Charge there is something *supposed*, and something *asserted*. The Supposition is, that there are some things,

the

the Knowledge of which is little or nothing Perfective of the Understanding. The Assertion is, that Learning is generally placed in the Knowledge of such things. The Proof of the Supposition will engage my Pen upon the discussion of a very *curious* and *weighty* *Question*, wherein the Perfection of the Understanding does consist, or what it is that is Perfective of the Understanding? Which when we have duly fix'd and stated, we shall then have a certain *Measure* to go by in the Proof of the Assertion.

## X V.

To the Question then I answer, That the Perfection of the Understanding, as that of the Will, is either *Formal* or *Objective*. The *Formal Perfection* of the Understanding, as that of the Will, is no other than its Exercise or Operation, which is *Thinking* and *Perception*, as that of the other is *Willing* and *Chusing*. According to the vulgar

vulgar *Maxim*, that *the Perfection of every thing is its Operation*, which must be understood only of the *Formal Perfection*. The *Objective Perfection* of the Understanding is *Truth*, as that of the Will is *Good*. The Result of these two Perfections joyn'd together, is what in the Understanding we call *Knowledge*, and what in the Will we call *Vertue*.

## XVI.

Our concern is not at present with the *Formal*, but with the *Objective Perfection* of the Understanding. This we have said in general to be *Truth*, as that of the Will is good. And thus far there is neither *Difficulty* nor *Controversie*. All therefore that further remains to be here considered, is, what *Truth* that is which is the *Objective Perfection* of the Understanding, or, what *Truth* that is, in the *Knowledge* of which the *Perfection* of the Understanding does consist.

## XVII.

XVII.

Now since there is so great a Proportion and Correspondence between the Understanding and the Will, and the Perfection of each, the first Entrance we shall make upon the Resolution of this Question shall be to consider, what good that is which is the Objective Perfection of the Will, or, what good that is in the desiring and embracing of which the Perfection of the Will does consist. Which being determin'd, will afford at least a *Fair Ground and Occasion*, tho not an *infallible Measure* for the determination of the other.

## XVIII.

Here then 'twill be necessary to premise a Consideration of the Kinds of good. The most general distribution of which I conceive to be into these two, *Necessary* and *Contingent* good. By necessary good I understand that which cannot but be good, that which is always and immutably good. And

this comprises under it the good of the *End* which is desirable for it self, commonly called *Pleasant Good*. And the good of the *Means*, which has an immutable Connexion with it, and is desirable for the other, commonly call'd *Profitable Good*. By *Contingent Good* I understand that which may, or may not be good, and is good, whenever it is so, only upon a *Positive* account, because enjoy'd by the Will of a Competent Authority. This can never be the good of the *End*, or a self-desireable Good ; nor can it be such a good of the *Means* as has a *Natural* and *Immutable Connexion* with it ; but is always an *Arbitrary* and *Lawless* *Mutable Means*.

### XIX.

This being briefly premised, I shall venture to assert, That that Good which is the Objective Perfection of the Will, is *Necessary Good*. Either that which is *Self-desirable*, as God the Universal, or

any

any other particular pleasant good. Or else that which has an *immutable Connexion* with it, as Moral Good. As for Contingent Good, that is no otherwise perfective of the Will, than in the force and vertue of the necessary Good. For Obedience to a positive Law is no otherwise a Virtue, than as 'tis included in some general natural Law, whereof 'tis a contingent instance. Which is also the ground commonly assign'd by *Casuists*, why the Human Laws oblige in Conscience. According to that of *Aquinas*, Lex Humana Obligat in Conscientia, quatenus participat legem æternam & naturalem. *An Human Law obliges in Conscience as much as it partakes of the Eternal and Natural Law.* That is, as far as it is founded, or relies upon the immutable Will of God and the Dictate of Natural Reason.

## X X.

This is too plain to need much Proof, though not so plain but

C 2 that

that it *may* be demonstrated. I  
then a Reason be demanded why  
the Objective Perfection of the  
Will is only necessary, not contin-  
gent good, 'twill be sufficient to  
say, that that only is Perfective  
of the Will, which naturally and  
of it self, makes it *Happy*, and  
wherein she can *acquiesce* with sa-  
tisfaction and delight. But this  
is only necessary good, that which  
is essentially, intrinsically, and im-  
mutably good, either as the *End*  
or as having a *Natural Connexion*  
with it, either of which involve  
Happiness. As for contingen-  
good, that is supposed to be of  
self indifferent as to Happiness  
and tho by positive Ordination  
may be made a condition of it,  
yet still it contributes to it only as  
an *Arbitrary Means*, which has no  
inward goodness in it self, and  
whose whole Moral Excellency  
deriv'd from some general Law of  
Reason, whereof 'tis an Instance  
by accident, and in virtue where-

of it obliges. Thus *Moses's* striking the Rock, and nothing more than the Will of the Will in it, but only as 'twas an Instance of that *General Law* of obeying the Divine Will in all things. Nor did the Virtue of *Moses* consist, properly and strictly speaking, in striking the Rock, but in *Obeying God* by striking the Rock.

## XXI.

By this it appears what good that is, in the desiring and embracing of which the Moral Perfection of the Will does properly and ultimately consist. That it is *Necessary*, not *Contingent* good. Whence we may take Instruction how to state the Perfection of the Understanding, which we shall do by following the same Common Measure. First then be it here also premised, that as in relation to the Will, all *good* is either *necessary* or *contingent*, so in relation to the Understanding, all *Truth* is either *Necessary* or *Contingent*. For be-

sides the immediateness of the Opposition, which is Contradictory, I further consider, that that must be the Adequate Division of *Truth* which is of *Being*; Truth being a property of Being, and such an one, as tho formally and abstractly different (for the Subject must never be included in the Precise Reason of the Property) is yet Materially, and Concrete the same with it. But now Necessary and Contingent is the Adequate Division of *Being*, therefor also of *Truth*.

## X X I.

By Necessary Truth I understand that which cannot but be True, that which is always and immutably True. Such is God among *Simple Truths*, who is immutably what he is, and all the *Divine Ideas* which (as I have elsewhere abundantly explain'd it) are the very Essence of God, as variously imitable or participable, the or thus. Such also among *Complex Truths*

*Vid. Reason and Religion.*

*Pag. 82.*

*Truths* are all Propositions of Eternal Truth, whether Absolute or Hypothetical, with all their regular Inferences and Conclusions, which (as I have also elsewhere shewn) are nothing else but the *Divine Ideas* themselves as they respect each other according to their several immutable Habitudes and Combinations.

*Vid. the  
same Treas.  
tise, Pag.  
203.*

### X X I I I.

By Contingent Truth I understand that which may or may not be True; that, whose Truth depends not upon the Essence of God. (That *Ground* and *Pillar* of all *Necessary Truth*) but only upon his *Meer Will* and free Pleasure, either decreeing or permitting. Such among *Simple Truths* are all Created Beings, the whole *Edyptian* World, and all things in it, which tho made according to the Eternal and Immutable Patterns of the Divine Ideas or *Archetypal* World, yet in themselves are *Temporary* and *Mutable*. Such also among

*Complex Truths* are all those Propositions, the Terms of which have no Essential or Immutable Connexion with each other, but are so and so combined and related, meerly by the Decree or Permission of him, who is the Author of whatever is besides himself.

#### XXIV.

Under the First Order of Truths are comprehended all those things which are the Matter of those *Arts* and *Sciences* which are built upon stable and immovable Foundations, which depend not upon the System of the present World, but were antecedent to it, and might have been study'd before 'twas made, and according to which the World it self was made, such as *Theology*, *Metaphysicks*, *Morality*, *Geometry*, &c. together with all those unchangeable Rules and Measures of Reason and Consequence which are to be used about them all, which is the Subject of that Art or Science we call

*Logic.*

*Logic.* Under the second Order are comprehended all *Matters of Fact*, all *Temporary Events*, all *Natural or Artificial Effects*, &c. Which are the Matter of all Arbitrary and Mutable Sciences; as *History*, *Chronology*, *Knowledge of Tongues*, &c. Which began with this *Mundan System*, and stand or fall with it.

## XXV.

Now as that *Good* which is primely and properly Perfective of the Will, is *Necessary Good*; so following the same Proportion I shall not doubt to assert, That that *Truth* which is Primely and Properly Perfective of the Understanding, is also *Necessary Truth*. And as *Contingent Good* is no otherwise Perfective of the Will, than in the Force and Vertue of the *Necessary Good* (as was above Explain'd) so likewise *Contingent Truth*, is no otherwise Perfective of the Understanding than in the Force and Vertue of *Necessary Truth*,

Truth, that is, of the *Divine Ideas* wherein 'tis contain'd. As for Example, when I speculate some particular Artificial Triangle, which is a Contingent Simple Truth, it is no otherwise Perfective of my Understanding, than as it is beheld in its Necessary and Immutable Nature, or (which is all one) in the *Divine Idea*. And thus again, when I form a *Proposition* concerning this Triangle, by ascribing to it some Property or other, which is a Contingent Complex Truth, this again is no otherwise Perfective of my Understanding than as it belongs to, and is beheld in the Nature of a Triangle in *Common*, which is Necessary and Immutable, being no other than an Idea, or a *Determinate Mode* of the *Divine Omnipresence*. So that at length the Perfection of the Understanding is resolv'd into the Knowledge of necessary Truth, which is its only Objective Perfection ; that which

which is Contingent being no way perfective of it, but only in virtue of the other.

### X X VI.

I am ( *Madam* ) very sensible how strange and Paradoxical this way of Philosophizing will seem to those who are either un-addicted to Meditation in general, or not conversant in Theories of this kind; and therefore for *their sakes*, rather than for any *inevidence* of the *Argument*, I will give some Proof and Confirmation of it, which I will so order, that it shall be an *Explanation* at the same time. I will therefore first shew that 'tis so, and secondly, *how* and *why* 'tis so. That it is so I prove thus: First, I suppose that God was once when there was nothing besides God. Again, I suppose that as the Being of God did go before all other being in Order of *Time*, so in Order of *Nature* it was antecedent even to the Will of Creating, putting, or permitting any thing.

thing. Again, I suppose that there was therefore then no other Truth but necessary Truth, that is, the Divine Ideas with their several Habitudes and Complications. I suppose again, that therefore God must be consider'd as knowing then only these *necessary Truths*. And yet I suppose again, that God was as perfect then as he is now; and consequently, that the Divine *Understanding* was as perfect then as now, the Nature of God requiring not only that he should be *Absolutely Perfect*, but that he shou'd be so in *himself*. Whence I infer, that therefore the whole Perfection of the Divine Understanding is to be resolv'd into the sole Knowledge of *necessary Truths*, and that the Knowledge of *Contingent Truths* gives no Perfection to it, any otherwise than as 'tis beheld in that which is necessary, as was said before.

## XXVII.

From this Process of Reasoning,

I presume 'tis sufficiently evident, that the Objective Perfection of the *Divine Understanding* is only *Necessary Truth*, which I take in the first place to be a strong ground of presumption, that the Perfection of *Human Understanding* does also consist in the same. But to make it further plain that it does so, I suppose again, that nothing were to exist but only God, and one Intelligent Being ; and that this Intelligent Being had the full and perfect fruition of God. Upon this supposition I enquire, whether this Intelligent Being would be perfectly Happy or no ? Without all question he would, as enjoying an *All-sufficient Good*. Well, if so, then he must be perfectly happy in his *Understanding*. And yet 'tis most certain, that he could then have the knowledge of very little more than *Necessary Truth* ; for all that he could possibly know besides, would be only that he himself did exist, and that he knew these

these Necessary Truths, and that he was happy in the knowledge of them, and the like. And lest the knowledge of such Contingencies should be thought any Accumulation to his Happiness, we will carry our Hypothesis a little further, by supposing that this Intelligent Being were not to *attend* to any of his own Perfections, or to any of those few Contingent Truths resulting from them, but were only to Contemplate God and the Divine Ideas ; and then I demand whether his Understanding would be sufficiently perfected or no ? 'Tis necessary to answer in the Affirmative, whence 'tis also as necessary to conclude, that the only Objective Perfection of our Understanding is *Necessary Truth*.

## XXVIII.

This I think sufficient to prove that 'tis so. I shall now briefly explain the *Mode* of it, by shewing *how* and *why* 'tis so ; and I account for it after this manner.

Necessary

Necessary Truth is the same with the Divine Ideas; and accordingly *Plato*, I remember, calls Science a *Participation of Ideas*, and the Divine Ideas are the very Essence of God, as 'tis variously imitable according to its *Omniformity*: Necessary Truth therefore is no other than the Essence of God, the very *Substance* of the Divinity. More particularly, it is the same with the Divine λόγος, the second Person in the Holy Triad, who is Ἡ ἀρχέτυπος σοφεγγίς, as *Philo* speaks, the *Archetypal Seal*, and νόσμος, the *Intellectual World*, and <sup>νέα</sup> ἀρχέτυπον τοῦ θεοῦ γῆμα, the <sup>κοσμος.</sup> *Archetypal Paradigne*, and *ἰδέα τῆς ἴδεων*, the <sup>p. 3.</sup> *Idea of Ideas*. Whom also the Scripture represents as the *Wisdom* of his *Father*, and as the *Light* of the *World*, and who enlightens every Man that comes into it, not only *Efficiently* (as 'tis vulgarly understood) but also *Formally*, he himself being the *Truth* and the *Light*, in which we see all things.

## XXIX.

These things (Madam) I only hint to you, referring you for further satisfaction to your deservedly admired Monsieur Malebranche in his *de la Recherche de la Verite*, and to a Treatise of mine call'd *Reason and Religion*; where I have purposely treated of the *Divine Ideas*, and of our seeing all things in them: In which however whatever is deficient shall be supplied in another Latin Treatise of a larger compass, now under my hands, and which I shall communicate to the World e're long (if God please) to continue my Life and Health) under the Title of *Theoria Mundus Idealis, sive Metaphysica Platonica*.

## XXX.

However, lest I should be thought to proceed upon a precarious ground, I will here give you one short and evident Demonstration, that Necessary Truth is the very Essence of God, and then con-

of whatever is besides himself, or that whatever is, is either God, or the effect of God, is a clear and acknowledg'd Principle. Upon which I thus argue: Necessary Truth is either God, or the Effect of God: But it is not the Effect of God, therefore it is no other than God himself.

## XXXI.

That it is not the Effect of God, is evident from the many Absurdities that would follow upon that Supposition. For first, God would be then a *Necessary Agent*; for if Necessary Truth be an *Effect*, 'tis a *Necessary Effect*, and a Necessary Effect must have a Necessary Cause. Again, God would not only be a *Necessary Agent*, but also (which is worse) an *Unintelligent Agent*. The consequence is unavoidable, you for if Truth be the Effect of God, then antecedently to the effecting of it, there was no Truth, and then consequently no *Knowledge*. Again, if Necessary Truth be the Effect

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of God, then the Perfection of the Divine Understanding must be supposed to depend upon something that is not God; nay, upon something *Created by God*. 'Twill follow again, that God has made something which he cannot destroy. And lastly, to add no more, if Necessary Truth be the Effect of God, then there will be something *Necessary*, *Immutable* and *Eternal*, &c. besides God. The *Consequences* are all *plain*, and so are the *Absurdities*. The last of which appeared so great to the Excellent Monsieur Poiret, a stiff Opposer of your beloved *Male branche*, and of the *Ideal Philosophy*, that he urges this as one Argument against the very *being* of *Necessary Truth*, because there would be something *Necessary* besides God, not considering us, that this Necessary Truth is really one and the same with God himself. And this alone puts by the force of his Argument against the *being*

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in, and there would be something  
Necessary besides God. Since  
then Necessary Truth is not the  
Effect of God, it remains by Ver-  
tue of the *premised Disjunction*,  
that it must be no other than the  
very Substance and Essence of the  
Deity.

### XXXII.

I further consider, that the  
Essence of God is intimately and  
immediately united to the mind of  
Man ; this is plain from *Scripture*,  
which tells us, that in God is our  
Life, our *Motion*, and our *Being*.  
And from *Philosophy*, which assures  
us, that what pervades all things,  
must needs be immediately united  
with every thing. And for this,  
you have the Authority of your  
excellent *Malebranche*, who there- *De la Re-  
cherche de  
la verite,*  
p. 208.

fore calls God the *Place of Spirits*,  
as Space is the Place of *Bodies*.

### XXXIII.

Now upon these two Suppositions, that Necessary Truth is the same with God himself, and that the Essence of God is immediately united to the Mind of Man, 'tis easie to Conceive *how* and *why* Necessary Truth should be the Objective Perfection of our Understanding; since to make an Object Perfective of the *Faculty*, nothing else is requisite, than that it be its *proper good*, and that it be *intimately Present* to it. And this will also sufficiently give us to understand, that *Contingent Truth* cannot be the *Objective Perfection* of the Mind; first, because that a Created Being, whereas God alone is our proper Good. And secondly, because 'tis *without* us, and cannot be immediately united to our minds, without which condition, were it never so *Perfect* otherwise, it could contribute nothing.

nothing to the *Perfection* of our  
Understandings.

There is no First Principle seems to me more Evident, than that the whole Perfection of the Mind does consist in its Union with God, who is her *only* as well as *true* Good. For the good of the Mind must of necessity be something *Spiritual*, otherwise it would be of a Nature inferior to her self, and so not capable of being her Perfection. But neither is that enough. Whatever is the good of the Mind must not be only of a *like* Nature with the Mind, that is, of a *Spiritual*, but of a *Superior* Nature too. It must be something above the Mind that can be its Perfection, and that can act upon it, and enlighten it, and reward it, and raise pleasing Sensations in it, otherwise how can it add any thing to its better Being or Perfection ? And in order to all this it must be intimately united with it, otherwise how can it so act upon it ? But now God is

the only Spiritual Being, whom we can possibly conceive thus qualified to be the Good of our Minds. Whence it follows, that he only is so, and that we cannot become either more Perfect or more Happy in any Kind or Degree, but by our Union with, and Possession of God. Whence it further follows that Truth could not be any Perfection of our Understandings, if it were not the same with the Divine Essence, and consequently that that Truth only is a Perfection of the Mind, which is the same with God. And since that is only *Ideal or Necessary Truth*, I conclude that this and this only is the Objective Perfection of Human Minds.

#### XXXIV.

And thus have I given a full Resolution to that Curious and Important Question which the Proof of my Supposition engaged me upon, and which is to be the Measure of what follows in this Reflection. It is plain from hence that

that there are some things the Knowledge whereof is little or nothing perfective of the Understanding. For as I have shewn, 'tis not *Contingent*, but *Necessary* Truth, wherein the Perfection of the Understanding does consist. Whence it follows, that True Learning ought to be placed in the Knowledge of *Necessary Truth*, in the Comprehension of those Arts and Sciences, whose Foundations are not Arbitrary, but Stable and Immutable, and in understanding the Eternal and Unchangeable Laws and Measures of *Reason* and *Consequence*. He therefore is the truly Learned and Knowing Man, who has furnish'd his Mind with bright and clear Ideas, lodg'd them orderly and regularly in his Head, and settled the Relations and Consequences of one to another. He that is able to think clearly and distinctly (for so much a Man knows, as he distinctly understands, and no more) to judge

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truly and solidly, and to reason dependently and consequentially. In short, he that sees most of the *Divine Ideas*, is most familiarly conversant in the Intelligible World, and has the largest and the clearest View of the *Field of Truth*. This I hold to be Learning, and Intellectual Perfection; and besides what Arguments I have alledged in behalf of this Hypothesis, it is further Confirmed by the Authority of *Plato*, when he makes the *Happiness* or *Perfection* of Man (for 'tis all one) to consist in the *Contemplation* of *Ideas*.

### XXXV.

But notwithstanding the unquestionable Certainty of the Premises, this is not that Measure which the generality of the World has thought fit to proceed by. Learning is generally placed in the Knowledge of *Contingent*, not of *Necessary* Truth. For your *Ladyship* very well knows that the World

World does not esteem him a Learned Man, whose Learning has clear'd his Understanding, who is arrived to Clearness and Distinctness of Conception, and is a thorough Master of *Notion* and *Discourse*: No, 'twill cost great Pains, great Labour of Mind, and Anxiety of Thinking to arrive to this Pitch. Nor will all the Pains in the World do, unless a Man be Naturally *made* for it, unless he be of a *Notional Complexion*, and has had his Head cast in a *Metaphysical Mould*. Whereupon this Attainment is like to be the Lot of a very Few. This therefore must not be *Learning*, but something else must, that lies more within *Common reach*, tho of no real Moment to the Perfection of the Understanding. Such (as I have shewn) are *Contingent Truths*, and yet Learning is generally placed in the Knowledge of these.

For first, 'tis reckon'd a notable point of Learning to understand variety of *Languages*. This alone gives a Man a Title to Learning without one Grain of Sense; and on the other side, let a Man be ~~an~~ *Angel* for *Notion* and *Discourse*, yet unless he can express the same *Thoughts* in variety of Words, he may go for a *Rational*, but will by no means be esteem'd a *Learned Man*. And this brings to my mind a Passage which I met with not long since in *London*, where being in Company with an Ingenious French Man, I ask'd him of what repute *M. Malebranche* was with the *Learned* in *France*? He told me, that he was look'd upon as a great Master of Notion and Speculation, but as a Man of no great Learning. I ask'd him, Why? Because, said he, he understands but few Languages. How much that excellent Author's Talent may lie that way I am not concern'd. But what

whatever it be, the most *Learned* of them all must give me leave to say, that I would rather be Master of a Quarter of his Sense, than of all the Languages that may be form'd out of the *Alphabet*. But is it not a strange thing that so much *Stress* should be laid upon such a *Trifle*? For what am I the better for being able to tell what 'tis a *Clock* in several Languages? What does this signify to the Perfection of my Understanding? Words are purely in order to *Thought* and *Sense*, and therefore are of no further value than as they serve as helps either to *Learn*, or to *Communicate* the other. To affect them therefore for *themselves*, is to turn the *Means* into the *End*, than which nothing is more absurd. And yet this vain piece of *Pedantry* has prevailed all the World over, and with some to that degree, that they have confounded *Ideas* with *Words*, and have made all *Science* to terminate in

in the latter. Thus the Philosophers of the *Nominal way*, and particularly Mr. Hobbs, who makes Reason to be nothing else but *Sequela Nominum*, a well-order'd *Train of Words*. Never certainly was there a grosser piece of Idolatry, nor a plainer Argument of the great degeneracy of Mankind. And tho all the Multipliers of Tongues are not Comprehended under this latter charge, yet it may concern them to consider, how great a Folly it must needs be, to place Learning in that, which is one of the greatest *Curses upon Earth*, and which shall utterly

*Cor. 13.8. Cease in Heaven.*

## XXXVII.

Again, it passes for an extraordinary part of Learning to understand *History*, that is, in other words, to know what a company of silly Creatures, call'd *Men*, have been doing for almost this 6000 years. Now what is my Understanding the Perfecter for know-

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ing this? I deny not but that there are some matters of Fact, as the more remarkable Turns of *Ecclesiastical History*, together with the greater Revolutions of the *Civil World*, that may be of *Moment* to be known; not that the knowldg of them as such is *Learning*, or Perfective of the Understanding; but because by discovering to us the Conduct of Divine Providence they supply us with occasions of adoring and glorifying the wisdom and goodness of God. I am not therefore against the *knowing* these things, but only I would not have men think themselves the *Wiser* or more *Learned* for such *Knowledge*. For 'tis one thing to say that a thing *deserves* to be known, and another to say that 'tis *Learning* or *Wisdom* to know it. For a thing may *deserve* to be known, not as *perfecting* the *Understanding*, but *merely* as *touching* upon our *Interest*. I grant therefore that it may be of *Consequence* to know some

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Historical Passages, if we are any way concerned in them, and so it may to know the Clock has struck One, if I have appointed an *Affig-nation* at that time; but sure the *bare naked Theory* of the Clocks having struck One, can add but little to the stock of my Intellectual Perfection. The most *trivial* matter of Fact in the World is worth knowing, if I have any *concern* depending upon it; and the *greatest* without *that* is utterly insignificant. So that 'tis not from the *perfecting* of our *Understanding*, but from the *Relation* they have to our *Interest*, that these things deserve to be known.

### XXXVIII.

This is sufficiently plain from the Measure we have premised, by which no Truth is perfective of the Understanding but only *Necessary Truth*. But to address my self more Convincingly to the great Magnifiers of *History*, I shall only desire their Answer to this one Question.

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Question. Suppose such and such Matters of Fact, on the knowledge of which they Found their Title to Learning, and perhaps glory more in the *knowing* them, than the *Actors* themselves did in the *doing* them. Suppose, I say, such matters of Fact had never been *done*; suppose *Fabius* had never Weather'd out *Hannibal* by *Delays*; nor *Cyrus* took *Babylon* by draining the River into the Ditches, what loss or diminution would this have been to the Perfection of their Understandings? They cannot say it would have been any. And why then should the knowing them now they *are* done, be reckon'd as an Intellectual Improvement? And yet we find that 'tis so, and that Men study these things not only for their *use*, (for that I allow) but for their meer *Theory*, placing Learning in *such* History, which has nothing to commend it, but only that it tells *you* such and such things were done.

done. Of this impertinent sort is the greatest part of the *Roman* and *Grecian* History, which (had not the World *Voted* it for *Learning*) would no more concern a Man to know, than that a Bird has dropt a Feather upon the *Pyrenæus* Mountains.

### XXXIX.

Again, it goes for a Notable Piece of Learning to understand *Chronology*, to be able to adjust the Intervals and distances of Time, to know when such an Action was done, when such a Famous Man flourish'd, and who and who were contemporary, and the like. Now I deny not, but that while Men live in this World, they may be concern'd to have some acquaintance with these things, by reason of some interest or other that depends upon it. It may therefore, I say, for some purposes, be convenient to know that. For instance, there is a two-fold *Hera* (or date) of the Victory at *Actium*,

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the one reckon'd from the Fight at the Promontory of *Actium*, according to the account of *Dio* and *Xiphilinus*; the other from the taking of *Alexandria*, and the Death of *Cleopatra*, according to *Ptolemy*, *Josephus*, *Eusebius*, and *Censorinus*. But however, concerning this may be, with respect to its usefulness, yet certainly as to any Intellectual Perfection that accrues by it, it must needs be a very unedifying Stuffage of Minds, and yet 'tis counted a great Accomplishment and Enrichment of it.

## XL.

Now Another thing there is which bastes for wonderful Learning, which I cannot well reduce either to Necessary or Contingent Truth; or indeed it does not belong to Truth at all, and that is our Sophistical way of Disputation. And indeed it may well be call'd so, for 'tis generally manag'd, 'tis nothing but meer Quibbling and pesting, not Arguing but Punning.

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For suppose the Question be, Whether he that has Faith shall be saved? No, says the Opponent. If the Damn'd have Faith, then not every one that has Faith shall be saved; But the Damn'd have Faith. Therefore, &c. Here to plain that the Word *Faith*, though it has *Something* in Common in both Propositions, yet according to the *entire Idea*, signifies one thing in one Proposition, and another in another. And why then is not the whole Procedure to be rejected as Idle and Impertinent? As for *down-right* Fallacy and Equivocation, where there is so manifest Ambiguity (as between *Dog* and *Dog*, one signifying Celestial Sign, and the other a Terrestrial Animal) this is even where despised and laugh at, unbecoming both the *Acumen* and the *Gravity* of a Disputant. And we think we have sufficiently discharged our Hands of such a *contentious* Argument, by Crying out that

Whether there are *Four Terms* in the *Syllogism*. But now I would fain know whether it be not the same to all the real purposes in the foremention'd Instance, which is after the common way of our *Scholastic* Disputation? Is not *Faith* and *Faith* there, as much an Ambiguity as *Dog* and *Dog* here? For my part I can perceive but this only Difference, that *Dog* and *Dog* have nothing in Common but the *Name*, whereas *Faith* and *Faith* have some *Generical* Part wherein they agree. But what does this mend the Matter? For tho' there be some *Generical* Agreement, yet we take 'em according to their whole Ideas, that is, take the *Generical* part with its *Contracting Difference*, even and 'tis plain that they signify at two different things, and consequently that there is really as great an Ambiguity here as there. And this we plainly Confess when we come to *Distinguish*. For what is it this *Distinction* but a *Pointing* out of the

an Ambiguity? What is it else but to say, that such a thing is True in this Sense, but not in that. True in that Sense wherein the Point of the Question is not concerned, but not in that wherein it is. No? why then, notwithstanding the Generical Agreement the Procedure is as fallacious and impertinent as when the Question being about Star-Dog, the Opposition is about Land-Dog. And yet (such is the Inconsistency of Human Judgment) the one is counted Trifling, and the other Serious Arguing. Whereas indeed no Arguing can be so, but where the Terms of the Question are first Defined (as is done in Geometry), and then always used according to the first Stated Sense. All Disputing and otherwise than so, must necessarily be nothing else but mere Parning; only much worse than what is in common use, because 'tis Parning when a Man Pretends to be serious. And yet this is made

considerable Part of our Academic Education and Learning; and he is esteem'd the greatest Proficient, who is most vers'd in this Falacious *Trickish* way of Disputing, and is arrived to the greatest Sleight of Hand in this Philosophical Juggl, which notwithstanding all that Credit, and Reputation it has had, among, the Professors of Learning, both in our own, and in other Universities, I take to be so far from being any real substantial part of Learning, that 'tis one of the greatest Abuses and Corruptions of it, and is one of the first things that I should offer to be Reform'd at a *Philosophic Visitation.*

## XLI.

For this Scholastic way of Disputing may be consider'd, either as an *Acquirement*, or as an *Exercise*, and either way (as 'tis usually manag'd) it will be found to be no better than a Pompous Trifle. If you consider it as an *Ac-*

quirement, 'tis nothing else but an Habit, or rather a Trick of seeming to prove something, when really you prove nothing. And I think Monsieur *Gassendi* in his *Paradoxical Exercitations* has given a true Image and Representation of it, when he tells of the Six Eggs which the Country-man Order'd to be provided for the Entertainment of his Son, when he return'd home from the University. The Father would have him boyl Six Eggs, two for him, two for his Mother, and two for himself. But the Son, having an Itch to shew a Proof of his Scholastic Improvement, boyl'd but three. When his Father ask'd him, Why he had not provided Six? Why, says he, are there not here Six? How so? says the Father, I can see but three. No, replies the young Sophister, is not here one (telling them out) and is not there two, and is not there three? And don't 1, 2, and 3 make Six? Well, says the Fa-

ther, then I'll take two, and your Mother shall have one, and you shall have the other three. And now I think all was right and as it should be. The Son for his part gave a true *Specimen* of his University Learning: ( For in earnest I don't take our vulgar way of Disputing to be one Jot better than this piece of *Egg-Sophistry*) and the Father serv'd him very well, and in his kind; that is, shew'd him Trick for Trick.

### XLII.

Nor is there any thing more in it consider'd as an *Exercise*. As the Acquirement *has* nothing in it, so the Exercise *contributes* to nothing. As the Former is an insignificant worthless *Habit*, so the Latter is an idle fruitless *Employment*. As it springs from Nothing, so it tends to Nothing, but is all over *Shuffle* and *Legerdemain*. It does not discover one Truth, nor enlarge any One Science. It serves neither to clear the Mind, nor to clear the

Argument, but rather to *fuarl* and perplex both. The Truth is, I can find nothing in this so magnified Exercise but *Punning* and *Canting*. *Punning* I call using Words in *various* Senses: *Canting* I call using Words *without* any real Sense or Notion under them: And these two I believe will go near to divide our Scholastic Exercises between them. For as far as I could ever observe for thirteen years together, this great Mystery of Disputation is nothing else but a mere *Tossing* of Words backward and forward, sometimes without any meaning, which is *Canting*; and sometimes with more Meanings than one, which is *Punning*. Upon which Consideration I must needs own (whether it be my Ignorance or no, I can't tell) that I had ever a very mean Opinion of this sort of *School Errantry*, (and that I always thought the Time spent at the Public Schools to be as much *Loitering*, as that in the *Tennis-Court*.

## XLIII.

I could here run out much further, but that I find my self prevented by the Excellent Monsieur Robault, who in his Preface to his Philosophy gives this true Account of this whole Busines, *That it is not a way to the Acquisition of New Truths, nor as such intended, but only a sort of Exercise or Sport of the Mind, whose end is nothing else but only to mix and intangle Truth with Falsehood, by the help of some little Tricks and Quirks, by which either side of the Question may be maintain'd, and neither of the Litigants seem to yield, tho the Propositions they hold be never so Absurd, and the Reason to the contrary never so Strong.* And truly this is the Ordinary Issue of all Public Exercises, where oftentimes in the same Chair contrary Opinions are disputed by turns, and are equally Victorious, while in the mean time the matter is not at all cleared, and Truth lies as near the bottom of the Well as it did

*did before.* This is the true state of the matter, and I am glad to find so great an Authority on my side, not so much to Confirm the *Truth*, as to take off from the *Singularity* and Boldness of the Censure. And to this I add this further Remark, that 'tis reckon'd a notable Excellence to be able to *Spin* out an Argument to a great length, and he is counted the best Arguer that can thus *Pun* longest. Whereas indeed did a Man speak to the *purpose*, *Brevity* would be his greatest Excellence.

#### XLIV.

There are many other things which the unaccountable humour of the World has *turn'd up* for Learning, which *Ignorance* will never be the better for, and which *Wisdom* does not *need*. Thus 'tis counted Learning to have tumbled over a multitude of Books, especially if *great* ones, and *old* ones and *obscure* ones, but most of all, if *Manuscripts*; the recovery of

one of which is reckon'd so much added to the *Commonwealth of Learning*, as they call it. A *Well-read* Man signifies the very same as a *Learned* Man in most Mens *Dictionaries*; and by *Well-read* they don't mean one that has read *well*, that has clear'd and improv'd his Understanding by his reading, but only one that has read a *great deal*, tho perhaps he has puzzled and confounded his Notions by doing so. Thus again it goes for Learning, to be acquainted with Mens *Opinions*, especially of the *Ancients*, to know what this or that Philosopher held, what this or that Author says, tho perhaps he says nothing but what is either *Absurd*, or *Obviously True*. Thus for instance, What can be more *Absurd* than that *Fancy* of *Empedocles*, that there are two *Semicircles* compassing betwixt them the Earth, one whereof was composed of Fire, the other of Air, and that the former made the Day, and

and the latter Night ? And yet to know this is *Learning*. And what again is more obviously true, than that *Grave Doctrin* of *Aristotle*, that *Privation* must go before the introduction of the *Form* in all Generation ? And yet 'tis *Learning* to know that he taught thus, tho it be a thing so plain, and so near the *Surface*, that a Child can't miss of it. To know the thing is nothing, because so plain and easie ; but to know that *Aristotle* held it, that's the *Learning*. Nay, to instance in a matter of a greater difficulty, tho I know very well, and am able to demonstrate the grounds of the *Atomical Philosophy*, or the Motion of the Earth, or the Circulation of the Blood, yet I shall not be admitted into the Order of the Learned, unless I am able to tell that *Moscus* the *Phœnician* invented the first, and that *Democritus* and *Lencippus* afterwards improved it, and that the two latter owe their Discovery to

*Coper-*

Copernicus and Harvey. So much  
 more Learned an Achievement is  
 it to know *Opinions* than things;  
 and accordingly, those are reckt  
 on'd the most Learned Authors,  
 who have given the greatest Spec-  
 imens of this kind of Knowledge.  
 Thus is *Picus Mirandula* more adm-  
 mired for the Examination he has  
 made of the Doctrin of the Ra-  
 gans, than any of them were for  
 what they deliver'd; and *Platarch*  
 has got more Credit from the  
 History he gives of their Opinions,  
 in the 2d Tome of his Works,  
 than from any of his Rational and  
 Moral Discourses. And were he  
 not accounted Learned for the  
 Former, I question whether the  
 Latter, (tho far more excellent than  
 they are) would ever have given  
 him that Title.

Now (Madam) what an hard  
 and unreasonable Imposition is  
 this, that tho I am able to think  
 and Write never so much like an  
 Angel

Angel my self, yet I must not be is  
 accounted a Man of *Learning*,  
 unles I can tell what every whimsical Writer has said before me.  
 And how hard will this fall upon  
 those, whose lot is to breath in the  
*last Ages of the World*, who must  
 be accountable for all the Whims  
 and Extravagancies of so many  
*Centuries*? And yet this is made  
 so great a part of Learning, that  
 the Learning of most Men lies in  
*Books*, rather than in *Things*; and  
 among Authors, where one writes  
 upon *Things*, there are twenty that  
 write upon *Books*. Nay, some  
 have carried this odd Humour so  
 far, that 'tis thought Learning  
 to know the very *Titles* of Books,  
 and their several *Editions*, with the  
 time and place, when and where  
 they were Printed. And I have  
 met with several my self, that  
 have valued themselves not a little  
 upon this *Mechanick* faculty, tho'  
 they knew no more of what was  
 in them, than they do of what

be is written in the *Rolls of Destiny.*

## XLVI.

From this placing of Learning in the Knowledge of Books, proceeds that ridiculous Vanity of *Multiplying Quotations*, which is also reckon'd another piece of Learning, tho they are used so unseasonably and impertinently, that there can be no other end in them, but only to shew that the Author has *read* such a Book. And yet 'tis no such Convincing Evidence of that neither, it being neither *New* nor *Difficult*, for a Man that's *resolv'd* upon it, to quote such Authors as he never *Read* nor *Saw*. And were it not too *Odious*, as well as *Obvious* a Truth, I could name to your *Ladiship*, some of those *Author-Mongers*, who yet pass for Men of shrewd Learning, and vast Reading.

## XLVII.

These, and many other such things (for 'twere endless to reck-  
on

on up all) are by the Majority of the World Voted for Learning and in these we spend our Education, our Study, and our Time tho they are all of them *Contingent Truths*, that are not Perfective of the Understanding, (nothing being so but only Necessary Truths or the Divine Ideas, the Eternal  $\lambda\circ\gamma\alpha$ , the *Word* and *Wisdom* of the Father) and also most of them *impertinent* and *unconcerning* ones. So that in short, the Charge of this Reflection amounts to this much, That Learning is generally placed in the Knowledge of such things, which neither the Intellectual *Perfection*, or any other *Interest* of Man is concern'd to know.

*The End of the First Reflection.*

The

## The Second Reflection.

Wherein the General Conduct of Human Life is tax'd, for using undue and irregular Methods, in Prosecuting what is really Perfective of the Understanding.

### I.

In the preceeding Reflection, the Intellectual Conduct of Human Life was censured for the general Misplacing of Learning, for placing it in such things as are not Perfective of the Understanding. In the present Reflection supposing it to be Free from that Fault, we shall consider it as Chargeable with

F another,

another, namely, with an *undesigned* *Irregular Method* of prosecuting what is really *perfective* of it. The first was an *Errour about the End*: This Second is an *Errour about the Means*, which are *Carried* on the two *Hinges* upon which all *Prudence*, and all *Imprudence* turns.

## II.

That the *Truth* of this Charge may appear, we must here also propose a *Measure*, whereby we may proceed, as we did in the *Former Reflection*. And as then we took upon us to determine what that is which is *Objective* in *perfective* of the *Understanding*, so as we must here consider what is the *Right Method* of *Prosecuting* what is so. Which being stated will be a *Measure* to us in this, as the other was in the *former Reflection* which

## III.

I design not here a just and particular *Treatise* concerning The *same* *Method of Study*, or *Inquiry after* *Truth*

Truth, this Province being already Professedly undertaken, and Excellently adorn'd by two as great Masters of Thinking as ever were, or are like to be in the World, *Cartesius* and *Malebranche*, of both which your *Ladyship* is so much a *Mistress*, that a further Undertaking of this kind would be as needless to your better Information, as to the Argument it self, also after the Management of it under such Excellent Hands. However something I must say, it being impossible to shew that wrong Methods are used in this *Grand Inquest*, but by predefining which is the *Right*. This therefore I shall do, but *briefly* only, and in General.

## IV.

Since therefore that Truth which is Perfective of the Understanding is *Necessary Truth*, and since this Necessary Truth is the same with the Divine Ideas (both which being already proved, are

here supposed) following the thread of the same Hypothesis, I find it necessary to affirm, that the right, and indeed only Method of Enquiry after that Truth, which is perfective of the Understanding is by Consulting the *Ideal World*, where only it is, or the Divine λόγος, who says of himself that he is not only the *Truth*, but also the *Way*.

## V.

Here I suppose two things. First that this Divine λόγος, or Ideal World is intimately united with and present to the Mind. Secondly, That we see and understand all things in him, That he is our *Light* and our *Wisdom*, the Light by which we See, and the Light which we See, that he is the very λόγος ἐνδιάδειλος, the inward Word and substantial Conception of our Minds, as he is the Father, and that in this Sense he *enlightens* every Man that comes into the World. This

need

need not prove now, because I v<sup>ide Res-</sup>  
 have done it professedly elsewhere, <sup>n and Res-</sup>  
 only I shall pass one necessary <sup>tion.</sup>  
 Remark upon the manner of our,  
 being enlightened by the Divine  
 λύ<sup>α</sup>ρ, who may be said to en-  
 lighten us in a double respect, ei-  
 ther *Fundamentally* and *Potentially*,  
 by putting us into a *Capacity* of  
 Illumination, by his intimate  
 Union and Presence with us ; or  
 else *Effectually* and *Actually*, when  
 we *attend* to his Divine Light,  
 which is always present to us, tho'  
 we are not so to it. In the Former  
 Sense he enlightens every Man, in  
 the latter only those who duly  
 consult him and attend to him.

## VI.

For I consider, that the Divine  
 λύ<sup>α</sup>ρ, is an *Inlightner* in the same  
 Proportion as he is a *Redeemer*.  
 Now he redeems us either by put-  
 ting us in a Salvable and Recon-  
 cilable State, which is a Redem-  
 ption *Universal Inconditionate* and  
*Antecedent*, or by actually recon-

ciling and Saving us, which depends upon, and is consequent to certain Conditions, and is conferr'd only upon those who are qualify'd accordingly. And as his *Redemption* is double, so is his *Illumination*. He inlightens either by putting us in a state or possibility of *Illumination*, by being intimately present with us, and surrounding us with his Divine *Ideal Light*, which is a Benefit Common to all, or by actually *informing* our Understandings when we apply our selves with due attention to his all-diffused Light, which is ever present to us, and to the whole Creation, and *Shineth even in the Darkness*, tho *the Darkness comprehend it not*.

John 1. 5.

## VII.

And I was not a little glad to find the Grounds of this distinction in the Writings of that Elevated Heathen *Hierocles*, which I shall give you in the Words of my own Translation. This bright Heathen Commenting upon that Mystical

Prayer

Prayer of Pythagoras, O Father Jupiter, either free all from their manifold Evils, or else discover to all what Daemon they use, Moves this Question, Since they that know God and themselves are free from Mortal Passions, why then are not all freed, since all are sufficiently assisted with the Opportunities of this Knowledge? To which he first gives this general Answer, Because the greatest part of Men embrace evil of their own accord, since they neither see nor hear neighbouring good. Then a little after he is more particular in this Account. Since therefore (says he) that any thing may be shewn to any one, 'tis necessary that the Actions of two Persons concur; (for how can you shew what you have a mind should be shewn, to a Blind Man, although you offer it to him a thousand times? Or how can you shew to one that sees, if you offer nothing to his sight?) both these must be present, some good proposed by him that shews, and an Eye capable

P. 144.

146.

pable of seeing in him to whom it is  
 to be shewn ; so that from a visible  
 Object, and a faculty of seeing, may  
 result a Manifestation. This being  
 so, let us suppose that all would be  
 freed from evil, if their Maker did  
 shew to all the knowledge of his own  
 Nature, and what Daemon they them-  
 selves use. But we find that all are  
 not deliver'd from evil ; it follows  
 therefore that he does not make this  
 discovery to all, but to those only  
 who of their own accord endeavour  
 to free themselves from evil, and  
 voluntarily fix their Eye upon what  
 is shewn by the intention of Contem-  
 plation. And again a little after,  
 Thus every Illumination of God by  
 the Concurrence of our Vision, becomes  
 a Discovery.

P. 148.

### VIII.

In all which Process this refined  
 Heathen supposes that God is  
 ready on his part to enlighten all  
 Men ; nay, that he does enlighten  
 them all so far, as to put them in  
 the way, and within the Possibili-

ty

ty of Illumination, which then becomes *Actual* and *Effectual* when they yield due Attention to the Divine Light. He does not indeed descend to so much Nicety and Particularity as to ascribe this Illumination to the Divine *λόγος*, or *Ideal World*, but only to God in general ; nor does he determin whether God does enlighten us only *Efficiently*, by infusing Acts or Habits of Knowledge ( as is more vulgarly held, than understood, and indeed is no way intelligible ) or *formally* by being himself the very Formal Light of our Minds, and the immediate Object of our Knowledge. This I say he does not determin, nor do I cite him to this purpose, having sufficiently Explain'd and Establish't this Theory elsewhere, but only to shew his Concurrence with me in this Distinction of the *double Illumination* of God.

*Reason and Religion.*

### I X.

These Supposals being premised,  
First

First, that that Truth which is Perfective of the Understanding, is *Necessary Truth*: Then Secondly, that this Necessary Truth is the same with the Divine Ideas; then Thirdly, that the Divine λόγος, or Ideal World, is intimately united with, and Presential to the Mind; then Fourthly, that we see and understand all things in him, and that 'tis he that is our Inlightner; and that lastly, tho' he inlightens all *Fundamentally* and *Potentially*, yet this Illumination is not reduced to *Act*, and made *Effectual*, but by the intervening of some Condition on our parts, which is duly to consult and apply our selves to him. From these Premises the same Conclusion which we touch'd on before, necessarily and evidently follows, that the Right and only Method of Enquiry after that Truth which is Perfective of the Understanding, is to consult the Divine λόγος, or Ideal World. For this is the Region of Truth, and here

here are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge. This is that great and Universal Oracle lodg'd in every Man's Breast, whereof the Ancient *Urim* and *Thummim* was an Expressive Type or Emblem. This is *Reason*, this is *Conscience*, this is *Truth*, this is that *Light Within* so *Darkly* Talk'd of, by some who have by their awkward, untoward, and *Unprincipled* way of representing it, discredited one of the Noblest Theories in the World. But the thing in it self rightly understood is true; and if any shall yet call it *Quakerism*, or *Enthusiasm*, I shall only make this Reply at present, that 'tis such *Quakerism* as makes a good part of St. John's Gospel, and of St. Austin's Works. But to return, this, I say, is that *Divine Oracle* which we all may, and must consult, if we would inrich our Minds with Truth, that Truth which is Perfective of the Understanding. And this is the true *Method* of being

ing truly wise. And this is no other Method, than what is advised us by this Divine λόγος, the

Prov. 8.34. Substantial Wisdom of God. *Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching*

*daily at my Gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.* And again, says the same Substantial Wisdom,

C. 9. 4. *Who so is simple, let him turn in hither.* And again, *I am the light of the world, he that follows me,*

*or (as the word more properly signifies) he that consorts or keeps Company with me, walketh not in*

Joh. 3.12. *Darkness.* This therefore is *Via Intelligentia, the Way and Method of true Knowledge, to apply ourselves to the Divine λόγος, to consult the Ideal World.*

## X.

Thus in general. If now it be further demanded how this is to be done; I answer, that there are three ways of doing it, and I can think of no more. The First is, by *Attention.* The second is, by *Purity of Heart and Life.* And the

the Third is, by *Prayer*. Upon each of which I shall bestow some few Remarks, such as may rather give *hints* than *full entertainment* to your thoughts, because I know your Ladyship loves to have something left to *work out* by your self in your own private Meditations. Which Consideration has made me all along use less Prolixity than the *Quaintness* and *Weightiness* of my Argument would otherwise justifie.

### XI.

The First Method assign'd, is *Attention*, or Application of Mind to the Intelligible World, the World of Truth, which Mr. *Malebranche* calls the Natural Prayer of the Soul to God for further Illumination. For indeed it is a silent Address and Application of the Soul to the Fountain of Light and Truth ; 'tis an Interrogation of the Divine Oracle, the Eternal *Word* of God, and a patient and quiet waiting upon him for an Answer

fwer ; 'tis in one Word, a Virtual Mental Prayer, an Act of *Intellectual* Devotion to the Father of *Lights*, and such as, if more expressly utter'd and unfolded, be-speaks him in the Words of the Royal Supplicant, *Give me Wisdom that sitteth by thy Throne*. This is the same with *Thinking* or *Speculating*, which if intelligibly accounted for, will be found to be nothing else but the Conversion of the Mind to the Ideal World, or Omnipresence of the Divine Essence ; which as it is the *First*, so is it also the *Directest* and most Compendious Method of Science. For this is to go directly to the *Spring-head*, to the *Lucid Fountain* of Good, 'tis to take hold of Essential Truth *nakedly* as it is in it self (as a very Contemplative Person expresses it) 'tis to fix the Eye of the Mind upon the *Intellectual Sun*, upon him who is Substantial Truth, and the Light of the World. Which must needs be the most ready way to be enlightened.

Tauler Ser.  
mon. 3.  
Pasch.

enlightned. For the more heedfully we attend to the Ideal World, the more we shall see and discover of it ; and not only so, but also more clearly *distinguish* what we do discover. For so a Man that casts a short careless Glance upon the *Galaxy*, sees only a *Confused Whiteness* arising from the numerous mixture of little Splendors : But when the same Person fixes his Eye with steadiness and delay of Application, he begins to discern something more distinctly a new Star ever and anon arises under his inspection, not discover'd before, and still the longer and harder he looks, the more he discerns, till at length he has discover'd as much as he can well attend to at once, and has satiated his Faculty with the *Brightness* and *Magnitude* of Light. The Application is as Obvious, as the Figure is Pertinent, and therefore I shall only remark this one thing more upon this part, that this was the Method of

the

the first Inventors of *Arts and Sciences*, who made their way into the Coasts of Learning by meedint of *Thinking*; and further, that this is the very Method that has been used by the greatest Improvers of them ever since, such as *Bacon, Boyle, Descartes, Galileus, Harvey, Mersennus, Digby, Malebranche, Poiret*, and ( whom I name with particular Honour and Reverence) our Excellent Friend *Dr. More*. All these must be allow'd, and I think are to be great Improvers of Learning, and that 'twas by this Method they did it. And I dare *Prophesie*, that if ever any extraordinary Advancement be for the future made in the World, 'twill be done by *Thinking*.

## XII.

This as to *Thinking* in General. But now as to the *Order* of Thinking, if your Ladyship can be supposed to need any Instruction about it, I cannot recommend you

you to a better Tutor than your Friend *M. Malebranche*, in his Second Part of his Sixth Book of Inquiry after Truth, where he purposely describes the *Method of Thinking*, which you may remember he reduces to these few following Rules. P. 412.

## XIII.

The first Law is, *That Evidence be maintain'd in our Reasonings.* From this Principle depends this general Law concerning the Matter of our Studies, *That we ought not to Reason but only of those things whereof we have clear Ideas*, and by Necessary Consequence, *That we ought always to begin with the most simple and easie things, and also to dwell long upon them, before we advance to the inquisition of things more Complex and Difficult.*

## XIV.

Upon the same general Principle, depend the Laws concerning the manner whereby we are to proceed in the Solution of Questions.

ons. The first of which Laws is this, *That the state of the Question to be solved, is to be most distinctly Conceived.* Besides, the Ideas of the Terms ought to be distinct, that they may be compared with one another, and that the Relations which are sought for, may be Known.

### XV.

But when the Relations of things to one another cannot be Known by immediately Comparing them, then the Second Law is, *that we should employ our thoughts to find out one or more middle Ideas, which we may use as a common Measure to Know by their Help the Relations that are between those things.* And withal he advises that we should study to have those Ideas clear and distinct, proportionably to the Accuracy and Numerousness of those Relations which we endeavour to comprehend.

### XVI.

But when the Questions are Difficult

sift, and require a long Examination, then the third Law is, that from the matter in hand all those things should be removed whose examination is not necessary to the discovery of the sought for Truth. Because the Capacity of the Mind is not to be without reason divided, but all its force is to be employ'd about those things from which it may perceive Light. And all those things which can be removed, and which being remov'd, the Question remains intire; they are the things that do not belong to the Question.

### XVII.

When the Question is included within a few Terms, then the Fourth Rule is, *That the matter of our Meditation is to be divided by parts, and those parts to be handled singly according to their Natural Order, by beginning with the more Simple, that is, with those which include fewest Relations. And that we should not pass on to the more Complex,*

Complex, till the more Simple be distinctly known, and render'd familiar.

### XVIII.

When by Meditation these things become Familiar to us, then the Fifth Rule is, *That the Ideas of all these are to be Contradict'd, and disposed in the Imagination, or to be written down in Paper, that they may no longer fill the Capacity of the Mind.* This Rule, tho' always useful, yet he makes it necessary only in the most difficult Questions, which require a great Capacity of Mind. And he says withal, that the use of this and the following Rules, is not to be Accurately known but only in *Algebra.*

### XIX.

When the Ideas of all things necessary to be consider'd, are clear, familiar, contract, and orderly digested in the Imagination, or express'd in Paper; the Sixth Law is, *That all things*

are to be Compared or Collated according to the Laws of Combination, alternately among one another, either by the sole Intuition of the Mind, or by the motion of the Imagination, joyn'd with the Intuition of the Mind, or by the Calculation of the Pen, joyn'd with the Attention of the Mind and of the Imagination.

## XX.

If none of all those Relations which result from all those Collations, be that which is sought after, then again from all those Relations those are to be removed which are of no use to the Solution of the Question: And the others are to be made Familiar, to be Contracted, and to be orderly disposed in the Imagination, or express'd in Paper, and to be compared with each other, according to the Laws of Combination. And then we are to see whether the Compound Relation which is sought for by any one of all those Compound Relations which result from these new Comparisons,

## XXI.

If none of those found Relations include the Solution of the Question, then again from all those Relations, the unserviceable are to be cast away, the other are to be made familiar, &c. And by proceeding in this manner, the Truth or Relation sought for, be it never so Complex, will at last be found, provided we are able sufficiently to extend the Capacity of our Mind, by Contracting Ideas, and that in all our Operations we always attend to the End and Scope which is to be arriv'd at. For in every step of this Intellectual Progress, we ought to have our Eye perpetually fix'd upon the State of the Question. To all which he adds one Caution more, that we should beware lest we should sit down Contented with a false Light or Appearance, and so be deceived. And that therefore our Collations in order to the finding out the Truth we look after, be

so often repeated, till we can no longer withhold our assent without being secretly chid and reprehended by a certain *Master* Answering from *within* to our Questions, that is, to our Labour, Application of Mind, and Desire of Heart. By which *Master within* this admirable Theorist can mean nothing else but the Divine *abyss*, or *Ideal World*, that Universal Oracle of Mankind, and of all the Intelligent Creation.

This is a short View of those Laws which the Excellent M. *Malebranche* has given concerning the *Method of Thinking*. And I believe if an Angel had been engaged in the undertaking, he could not have given Better. They are all Natural, Clear, Distinct, Easie, and depending; few enough not to *burthen* or *distract* the Mind, and yet many enough to *inform* it. And therefore I shall not be guilty of so much *Presumption* and *Impertinence* as to prescribe any other,

G 4 thinking

thinking it sufficient to consider and practise these. And so much for the first way of Consulting the Ideal World, which is by Thinking.

### XXIII.

The second way is by Purity of Heart and Life. This I confess has a more immediate and special influence upon the Knowledge of Spiritual and Moral Truths, according to that of our Saviour, *if any man will do his will*, he shall *know of the Doctrin*, &c. and that of his Prime Apostle, *The Animal man perceiveth not the things of God*, &c. But its Efficacy is not confined here, but has a larger Sphere of activity, and serves to the discovery even of all *Ideal or Necessary Truth*. For as viciousness not only proceeds from Ignorance, but also *causes* it, by besotting and clouding the Understanding, so Purity of Heart and Life not only proceeds from Light and Knowledge, but also produces it, and

Joh.7.17.

1Cor.2.14.

and helps the Soul to see more Clearly and Distinctly. Hence the Pythagorick and Platonick ~~methodum~~, the Method of Purification and Purgation so much talk'd of by *Porphyry*, *Iamblichus*, *Plotinus*, and particularly by *Hierocles* in his Introduction to his Noble Comment, where he has these Words, *As a blear Eye cannot behold a very bright Object till it be Purged, so a Soul not yet Clarify'd and refined by Virtue is not qualify'd to gaze upon the Beauty of Truth.* And the same Method is no less recommended in Scripture, *Wisdom will not enter into a Polluted Spirit*, says the Wise Man. And says the Angel to *Daniel*, *Many shall be Purify'd and made white, and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.* And says the Psalmist, *I am wiser than the Aged, because I keep thy Commandments.* And to this purpose also is that of our Lord to be understood, *He that follows me, that*

Wisd. 4.

Dan. 12.10.

Psal. 119.

that is, that lives after my Example, *Walketh not in Darkness*.  
 John 8.12. The Purity of his Heart will be Light to his Understanding.

## XXIV.

But to represent this more distinctly, there are two ways whereby Purity of Heart serves to the acquirement of Knowledge. *By Natural Efficacy*, and by the *Divine Grace and Benediction*. And First, It does it by Natural Efficacy, either by *clarifying the medium*, or by *assisting the faculty*. The former I conceive and represent after this manner. I suppose in the first place that the Soul sees through a Medium: Secondly, That this Medium is our *Terrestrial Vehicle*: Thirdly, That the *Grossness* of this Medium *binders the Vision of the Soul*. All which I ground upon those Words of the Apostle, *Now we see through a Glass darkly.*

1 Cor. 13.  
 12.

## XXV.

This Supposed, it follows that

what

whatsoever clarifies this Medium does also help the Vision of the Soul. And this *Purity* does, especially that more Eminent part of it, which consists in *Chastity* and *Temperance*. For first, It composes the *Passions*, especially that of *Lust*, by that the *Animal Spirits*, and by that the *Blood*. For the Motion of the Passions Ferments the Spirits, and the Fermentation of the Spirits agitates the Blood, and by agitation raises all the ferment and drossie parts of it; and makes it like a troubled Fountain, thick and muddy. And this I take to be one true reason why Men in any Passion can't reason so clearly as when they are in more quiet and silence of Spirit. But now by Purity of Heart all this disturbance is allay'd and composed, the Passions are becalm'd, the Spirits fix'd, the Fountain of the Blood clears up, and so all the inner part of that *Glass* the Apostle speaks of, becomes more

more bright and pellucid, more apt to transmit the *Rays* of the *Ideal Light*, and consequently we see more clearly through it. Tho it be still but *Darkly* in comparison of what we shall do here after.

## XXVI.

But this is not all ; This Purity does also Clarifie the *outward* part of the *Glass* too. First, *By Consequence*, because the finer the Spirits and Blood are, the finer will be the Threds of the outward Veil also. Then more *directly*, because Temperance does refine and Subtilize the Texture of the Body, diminishes from its Bulk and Grossness, and unloads the Soul of a good part of that Burthen, which not only presses down her *Aspirations*, but also hinders her *Sight* : And besides, it refines the inner part too, by bringing in fresh Supplies of fine Spirits. This was that Temperance which made

Dan. i. 15. the Faces of Daniel, Hananiah, Mischael,

Mishael, and Azariah, look *Clear* and *Fair*, and which made them *Wise* too, gave a quick and delicate Air to their Countenances, and let in the Light of the Ideal World upon their Souls. This was that Philosophical Temperance of the *Pythagoreans*, which ( to use the Words of Dr. More Commenting upon that Place) *is the Mother of that Wisdom which makes the Face to shine, and nourishes the Lissiform Vehicle of the Soul.*

### XXVII.

And as this Purity does Clarifie the Medium, so does it also *Assist* the Faculty. And this it does by the same general way whereby it clarifies the Medium, that is, by composing the Passions. For the Passions not only trouble and thicken the Medium (as was noted and explain'd before) but also *divide* and *disperse* the Faculty. For the more things a man *desires*, the more things he will be engaged to *think* upon, and the more things

he

he thinks upon at once, the more Langrid and Confuse will his Conception be. But now this Purity by composing the Passions contracts the Desires, and by contracting the Desires, it contracts also by consequence the Thoughts, and by this the Man is reduced to a greater *Unity, Simplicity, and Recollection* of Mind ; and having but few Thoughts to divide him, he is the better enabled to think clearly and distinctly.

## XXVIII.

And thus have I given a clear and distinct Account how Purity of Heart serves to the Acquisition of Knowledge by a *Natural Efficacy*. This it does also Secondly, by the *Divine Grace and Benediction*. Purity of Heart is that *Heavenly Lure* which invites not only the Holy Spirit, but also the Divine λόγος, to come and dwell in the Soul, and to enrich it with his *Ideal Communications*. This we may be assured of from his own mouth,

mouth, *He that loveth me, shall be Joh. 14.2.*  
*lov'd of my Father, and I will love*  
*him, and manifest my self to him. V. 23.*  
 And again, *If a man love me, my*  
*Father will love him, and we will*  
*come unto him, and make our abode*  
*with him.* The pure, chaste and  
 good Soul shall not only be loved  
 by the Divine λόγος, but be also  
 of his Council and Privacy. For  
 this is the *Spouse of the Word Eter-*  
*nal*, who first assumed *Innocent*  
*Nature*, and then assumes *innocent*  
*Persons*, the first by a *Natural*, the  
 second by a *Mystic Union*. This is  
 the *Beloved Disciple* who has the  
 privilege to lean upon the Bosom  
 of his Lord, and to be admitted to  
 his more secret Communications.  
 And therefore says the Psalmist,  
*The secret of the Lord is with them* Psal. 25.13.  
*that fear him, and he will shew them*  
*his Covenant.* And says our Lord  
 himself, *Blessed are the Pure in*  
*Heart, for they shall see God.* And  
 concerning the Four Children  
 that refused to defile themselves  
 with

with the Portion of the King Meat, it is said, that God gave them Knowledge, and Skill in all Learning and Wisdom ; and that *Dan. 1.17.* *Daniel had understanding in all Visions and Dreams.* For they were not only Pure and Temperate, but Religiously so, in obedience to the Law of their God, the God of Israel. Which the said God rewarded with Knowledge and Skill in all Learning and Wisdom in them all, but in Daniel peculiarly, with a faculty of interpreting *Enigmatical Dreams and Visions* ; as the Learned Dr. More observes in his excellent Comment upon that place.

Pag. 5.

### XXIX.

The third and last way of consulting the Ideal World is by Prayer. This is a method which the Scripture also advises us to: *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.* And this we know was the *King. 3.9.* method whereby the *Wise*st of Men attain'd

*Jam. 1.5.*

attain'd his unparallel'd Wisdom. For as Wisdom was his *Choice*, so the *method* of his seeking and gaining, it was by *Prayer*. And 'tis further observable that he address'd himself to the Divine λόγος, or Ideal World in particular, as you may see in that solemn Prayer of his recorded in the Book of Wisdom, *give me Wisdom that sitteth by thy Throne, &c.* Which I commend to your *Ladyship's* perusal at leisure.

## XXX.

And thus (Madam) have I Defined and by Scripture and Reason Proved, what is the Right Method of prosecuting that Truth which is perfective of the understanding. This in general I have shewn to consist in *Consulting the Ideal World*; the manner of doing which I have also shewn to be, first, by *Thinking*, the *Order* of which is also defined. Secondly, by *Purity of Heart and Life*; and Lastly by *Prayer*. This I take to be *Via Intelligentiae*, the Way and

H                    Method

Method of Wisdom, whose *House*  
I think is *New Built*, tho not up-  
on *Seven*, yet upon *Three Substan-  
tial Pillars*, and I should be glad  
if any one would be so kind as to  
shew me the Weakness of the  
Ground upon which they stand.

## XX XI.

And now (*Madam*) I think I  
need not use many Words to  
shew, that as Learning is generally  
placed in such things as are not  
Perfective of the Understanding,  
so that what is so is generally pro-  
secuted by undue Methods. For  
'tis but to compare the Methods  
in common use with that which we  
have premised and demonstrated,  
and you will immediately per-  
ceive the falseness and irregularity  
of them. For First, whereas the  
First and general Method of Wi-  
dom and Knowledge, is by con-  
sulting the Divine λόγος, or Ideal  
World, the World of *Light*, that  
Light which inlightens every Man  
that comes into *this* World, the  
gene-

generality of *Students* don't so much as Dream of this, nor make any such Application, but apply themselves altogether to the *Egyptian* World, to the World of *Darkness* and *Obscurity*. I call it the World of Darkness and Obscurity, for 'tis most certain that this material World is not in it self either *Visible* or *Intelligible*, nor can any way act upon our Minds, much less can it teach or inform them. Body can never enlighten Spirit. It cannot represent it self to it, much less can it represent other things. For not being intimately united to the Mind, whatsoever Representation it shall be supposed to make, must be transacted by Ideas. But now Corporal Ideas can never represent Intellectual Objects, nor can Bodies be supposed to send forth any that are *Incorporeal*. Whatever comes from Body must be of a Material Nature, and what is so, can be no apt Instrument to Illuminate the

Mind. This Material World therefore ( notwithstanding all that a Late Author has pleaded for our receiving our Ideas from our Senses) may be very truly and properly call'd the World of Darkness, as having no Light in it, nor being capable of producing any. The Ideal World is the true and only World of Light, and is therefore with a particular Emphasis call'd, *The Intelligible World*. As for the other, it is all throughout Darkness and Obscurity ; and tho God has placed a Sensible Light in it, or rather something that may be an occasional Cause of such a Sensation, yet as to any purpose of Intellectual Illumination, it is still a blind confused Chaos, and Darkness does still sit upon the Face of the Deep. And yet to this dark obscure World, which in it self is every whit as unintelligible as a *Non Ens*, do Men generally apply themselves for Light and Knowledge , without having any recourse

recourse to the true World of Light, the Ideal World: So verifying that complaint of God by the Prophet, *My People have forsaken me the Fountain of Living Waters, and have digg'd to themselves broken Cisterns, that will hold no Water.*

### XXXII.

Then again, whereas another more Particular Method is by Attention and Thinking, this is generally so little regarded, that no sort of Men think so little for the most part as they that are ingaged in the Profest Study of Learning and Knowledge. This they don't reckon as any part of Study, nor as any Progress in the Stage of Learning, but only as a Graver way of being Idle. 'Tis then only they Study, when they are hanging their Heads over an Old Musty Folio, and are making huge Common-places, and stuffing their Memories with Grey Sentences, and Venerable Sayings: And thus they

spend their *Time* and their *Ink*, and having Scambled through a company of Books (most of which perhaps were *Written* to as little purpose, as they are *Read*) they think themselves *Learned* Men, and the World is too often of their Opinion, tho they have not made themselves Masters of any *Sense* or *Notion*, nor are able to demonstrate one single Truth upon solid Principles, and in a Consequential Proces.

### XXXIII.

And this is the Method not only of those who *Misplace* Learning, but also of the most of those that place it *aright*. For even those that place it in *Ideal Truth* do not generally *Think* for it, but *Read* for it; seek it not in their Souls, but in *Books*. And this methinks I can never sufficiently Wonder at. Indeed as for those that place Learning not in being able to frame Clear and Distinct Conceptions of ones *Own*, but in

*Knowing*

Knowing the Opinions of *Others*, 'tis no wonder that *they* take this Method ; for tho' it be Not a Means to the End they *should* propose, yet 'tis a Means to the End which they *do* propose. But the wonder is, how those that place Learning as they should, in the Clear Conception of Ideal Truths, should think to find this meerly by tumbling over Books.

## XXXIV.

I deny not but that *Reading* is One way of *Knowing* (otherwise I should not be at the Pains to write this to your Ladyship) but then 'tis only by *Accident* that it is so, as it gives hints and occasions for *Thinking*. And therefore *Thinking* is the only thing to be regarded even in *Reading*, ( for *Reading as such* is Nothing) and then we Read to most purpose, when we are thereby most enabled to *Think*. So that *Thinking* is the *End of Reading*, as Understanding is the *End of Thinking*. We ought there-

therefore to read only in order to Thinking. And yet this Method is generally so much inverted, that the main stress is laid upon Reading. Nothing but *Read, Read*, as long as Eyes and Spectacles will hold, not regarding whether the Head be *Clear*, so that it be *full*.

### XXXV.

As to the particular Order in Thinking proposed by *M. Malebranche*, I refer your *Ladyship* to the same Excellent Author, to shew you how much it is *transgress'd*. Which he does at large, and to Wonderful Satisfaction, shewing first that the *School-Philosophers* do not observe that General Law concerning the matter of study, which is the cause of a great many Errors in their Physiology. Then shewing that the second part of the General Law is not observed by the Common Philosophers, and what extraordinary advances *Cartesius* made in Learning by the exact observation of

of it. Then he proceeds, to explain the Principles of Aristotle's Philosophy, where he shews that he never observed the second Branch of the General Law, and reflects upon those Errors of his Philosophy occasioned by his not doing so. But for a fuller account in these things I refer you to the Author himself.

## XXXVI.

Then again, whereas *Purity of Heart and Life* is another Method of arriving to the Light and Knowledge of Ideal Truth, your *Ladyship* cannot but know, and 'tis a sad as well as a true Observation, that this is not only neglected among that part of Mankind that sit down contentedly in Ignorance, and aspire to no greater stock of Knowledge than what they brought with them into the world, but also among the generality of those few that addict themselves to the Cultivation and Improvement of their Minds. Nay these in proportion to their Number seem more

more guilty of this neglect than the other, and nothing so common as to see Men of Curious and Inquisitive Tempers, and of famed Learning, who yet are very Corrupt in the Moral state of their Minds, and live very ill Lives. Whence some have taken occasion to represent *Learning*, as an Enemy to *Religion*, and have cry'd up *Ignorance* as the Mother of *Devotion*. And tho the Conclusion of these Men be notoriously weak and absurd, yet it must be confess that the *Ground* upon which they build it is too true. Men famed for *Learning*, are oftentimes as *infamous* for *Living*; and many that study hard to furnish their Heads, are yet very negligent in purifying their *Hearts*, not considering that there is a *Moral*, as well as a *Natural* Communication between one and the other, and that they are concern'd to be pure in Heart and Life, not only upon the *Common Account*, in order to a happy state

state hereafter, but also in pursu-  
ance of their own particular way  
and end here.

### XXXVII.

Then again Lastly, Whereas  
another Method of Wisdom is  
*Prayer*; I do not find that the  
generality of Students do at all  
apply themselves to this Method.  
Pray indeed ('tis to be hoped)  
they do for other things, which  
they think lie more out of their  
reach; but as for Learning and  
Knowledge, they think they can  
compass this well enough by their  
own proper Industry, and the  
help of good Books, without be-  
ing beholden to the assistance of  
Heaven: And this, tho they do  
place Learning in the knowledge  
of *Necessary Truth*. Which pro-  
cedure of theirs I cannot resolve  
into any other Principle, (I mean  
as to those that act by any) but  
the meer want of knowing or con-  
sidering that this Necessary Truth  
is really the same with God him-  
self.

self. For did they attentively consider, That *God is Truth*, and that so much as they possess of Truth, so much they have of God, 'tis not to be imagined they should be so indifferent in using *Prayer*, or any of the other preceding Methods of Consulting God for his *own Light*.

*The End of the Second Reflection.*

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The

## The Third Reflection.

Wherin the General Conduct  
of Human Life is tax'd  
with a too importunate,  
and over-earnest Pursuit  
after Knowledge in Gene-  
ral.

### I.

Having pass'd over the two first Stages of the Intellectual Conduct of Human Life, that of the *End*, and that of the *Means*; and reflected upon the Irregularities of each, by shewing how both are generally mistaken and misplaced; I am now arrived to the Third and Last, which consists not in the choice of the *Object*, or of the

the *Method* to it ( that belonging to the two former) but in the *Degree of Affection* wherewith they are prosecuted. Which part of our Intellectual Conduct, as it is equally *Capable* of being faulty, so I shall here make it my business to shew that it is *actually* as faulty and irregular, if not more than either of the two former. And the fault that I tax it with, is, *An importunate and over-earnest pursuit after Knowledge in General.*

## III.

The Charge of this Reflection is of a *larger* compass and extent than either of the two Preceding; those being directed against such as either misplace the *Object*, or else mistake the *Method* of Learning and Knowledge; but this takes in both together, and others also not concerned in either of the former. For not only those that err in the placing of Learning, or in the method to it, but also those who are *Right* in both, come under

the

the Censure of the present Reflection, they all agree in this, in being too importunate and vehement in the Pursuit of Knowledge.

## III.

Now in the making out the Truth of this Charge, we must here also, according to the Method observ'd in the two former Reflections, first lay down a common measure of proceeding, by stating the due Bounds of our present Affection to, and search after Knowledge: Or, How far it becomes Man to employ himself in the Prosecution of Learning and Knowledge? The due stating of which Question, will be a certain direction to us in the Determination of this, whether our general Inquest after Knowledge be immoderate or no. Now for the Determination of the first, it will be necessary to draw up the true State or Hypothesis of Man, according to the Posture wherein he now stands. Which I shall do distinctly in these following Considerations.

## IV.

First I consider, that the utmost Pitch of Knowledg Man by his utmost Endeavours can arrive to in this World is very inconsiderable. God indeed has given us Reason enough to distinguish us from the *Brute* part of the Creation, and we may improve it so far as to distinguish our selves from *One another*, and so one Man may deserve to be call'd Learned and Knowing in comparison of another that is either *Naturally* more ignorant, or more *unimproved*; but absolutely speaking, the most that any or all of us either know, or can know here, is of little or no Consideration. What we know of God is but *little*, for as the Apostle says, *We see through a Glass, darkly*: What we know of our selves perhaps is *less*, and what we know of the World about us is *not much*. *We have* Eccles. 43. *seen but a few of God's works*, as the Wise Man observes, and we *understand* yet *fewer*. There are almost

an infinite number of things which we never so much as *thought* of, and of *most* things we conceive very *darkly* and *uncertainly*, and there is not *one* thing from the greatest to the *least*, which we do or can understand *thoroughly*. Those that apply their whole study to any one thing, can never come to the End of that one thing ; for not only every *Science*, but every *particular* of it has its unmeasurable depths and recesses ; and 'tis confess'd by a great Inquirer into the Nature of *Antimony* ( as 'tis related by the Honourable Mr. *Boyle* ) that 'tis Nat. Hist. *impossible for one man to understand p. 13.* *thoroughly that one single Mineral only.* And if a Man cannot understand *All* of so *little*, how *little* must he understand of *All* ! Suppose further, that all the Knowledge of the Learned were put together, 'twould weight but Light ; for what one Art or Science is there that is brought to any tolerable Perfection ? And if the *Common Stock* be so little,

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how

how small a Pittance is it that must fall to every particular Man's share ! And where is that Man, who after all his Poring and Studying, is able to answer all the Questions, I will not say which God put to *Job*, but which may be askt him by the next *Idiot* he meets ?

## V.

'Twere an endless undertaking to represent at large the little that we know, or are capable of knowing. Nor do I design to turn a *second Agrippa*, and entertain your Ladyship with a long Harangue about the *Vanity of Humane Sciences*; only give me leave to touch upon two notorious instances of our Ignorance, and in that very Science which is pretended to be at the very *Vertical Point of Improvement*. 'Tis concerning the other the *Maximum* and the *Minimum* as the *Naturale*, the *Greatest* and the *Least* or has thing in Nature. As to the first infinite, the Question is, whether the Exten-

sion of the Universe be Finite or Infinite ? If you say 'tis Positively Infinite , besides the difficulty of conceiving how any thing can be so extended , 'twill follow , that God himself cannot add the least further Dimension to it. If you say 'tis Finite , suppose your self in the utmost extremities of it , and try whether it be possible for you to dis-imagin further Extensi-  
 on. Then as to the Second , the Question is , whether every , even the least assignable Part of matter , be infinitely Divisible or no ? If you say Yes , then 'twill unavoidably follow , that the least Atom will have as many Parts as the whole World. If you say no , then you must say that Matter may be Divided so long , till at last you come to a Part that does not contain more other Parts ; if so , then I enquire has this *uncontaining* Part Figure , or has it not ? If not , then 'tis infinite , Figure being only the Termination of Quantity. But if it

has, then it has more other Parts above, below, and of each side, and consequently may again be divided, contrary to what you suppos'd. So that you see here are *Desperate Difficulties* on both sides, say what you will you are equally baffled; and yet 'tis most certain that one only can be true, they being two opposite parts of a *Contradiction*, but which is so, is beyond the Capacity of Human Understanding to determin.

## VI.

The like Difficulties we meet with, when we inquire concerning *Time*, whether it be *Infinitely divisible*, or only into *Moments*? And so again in the Business of *Motion*, whether there be any such thing as the *Extream Degree of Swiftness*, and *Slowness*, or no? Neither of which can be defined without manifest Absurdity. But 'tis superfluous, as well as endless, to display the particulars of our Ignorance, tho indeed when all Accompts

cast up, *that* will be found to be our *best Knowledge*. This only in General, our Life is so short, our Progress in Learning so slow, and Learning in it self so long and tedious, and what we do or can know so very little, that the *Patrons* of *Scepticism* had much more reason to conclude from the *Disability* of our *Faculties*, and the *slightness* of our *Attainments*, than from the *uncertainty* and *instability* of *Truth*, that there is *no Knowledge*.

## VII.

Secondly, I consider, that as we can here know but Little, so even that very little which we do, serves more to our Trouble and Disquiet, than to our Pleasure and Satisfaction. And here comes in that experimental Reflection of the Wise Man, *In much Wisdom is much Grief, and he that increases Knowledge, increases Sorrow.* This Proposition is not true, *Absolutely* consider'd, Knowledge being the Per-

Eccles. 1.  
18.

fection of Human Nature, the  
 Colof. 3.10 *Image of God*, and the Principal In-  
 gredient of our Future Happiness  
 but only with *relation* to the pre-  
 sent State and Posture of Man  
 And in this respect it is abun-  
 dantly true. First, Because the  
 more we know, the more we  
 shall discover of our Ignorance  
 (that being the chiefest thing we  
 learn by our study) which we shall  
 find to be of an infinitely larger  
 Sphere than our Knowledge, and  
 consequently shall be more *trouble*  
 for what we do *not* know, than  
*pleas'd* with what we *do*. Second-  
 ly, Because the Prospect of what  
 yet further remains to be known  
 will inflame our Thirst after it. For  
 Wisdom says of her self, *They that*  
*Eat of me shall yet be Hungry, and*  
*they that Drink of me shall yet be*  
*Thirsty.* Which tho' it be a great  
 Commendation of Wisdom, and  
 an Argument of her inexhaustible  
 Excellence, yet 'tis withal a great  
 Instrument of Punishment to those

who

who can attain so little of it, as cannot *satisfie* that *Thirst* which it has *inflamed*. Thirdly, Because the more a Man improves his thinking Faculty, the more apt he will be to be disgusted and offended with the follies of Society ; as the most delicate *Touch* is the soonest put to pain. There being a thousand Impertinences that will strike very disagreeably upon a *discerning* Mind, which won't so much as affect a grosser Understanding.

### VIII.

But the Principal Ground of this Assertion, and which, did not the quickness of your *Ladyship's* Apprehension oblige me to Brevity, I could be *Voluminous* upon, is this. 'Tis most certain that Man is now placed in the Midst of Vanities and unsatisfying Objects, and that his True Good is not within his reach, and consequently whatever Pleasure he takes in those things that *are*, is purely owing to his *Ignorance* of their *Vanity*. Well,

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if so, then *Væ Sapienti, Wo be to the Wise Man.* This is not a place to be *Wise* in. There is nothing here Solid enough to endure the *Test* of Wisdom. The *Wise* Man cannot find a *Paradice* here, tho the *Fool* can. The more he knows, the more he discovers the Vanity of all pretended Enjoyments; and the more he does this, the more he streightens and retrenches his Delights; and the more he does this, the more he retires and withdraws himself from all Worldly Diversions, and this sets him the more a Thinking and Musing; and this again presents to his Mind a fresh and more lively Conviction of the Worlds Vanity, and this makes him again retrench his Delights, and so on in this returning Circle, till at length he finds nothing but his *bare Wisdom* to delight in. And a little more Thinking makes him see the Vanity of *that too*. And now all's gone. To dispatch this part in one word, this is the Fruit of being

being Wise, to be able to taste nothing that's *Present*, nor to flatter ones self with the *Prospect* of what is to *come*, which is a state of horrible Privation and Sterility. This is the *thorough Wise* Man's Lot, and every advance in Wisdom is a step towards this Condition. So true is it, that *he who increases Wisdom, increases Sorrow*, while in the mean time the Fool Laughs, and is Merry.

### IX.

*Thirdly*, I consider, that if our Knowledge could yield us more Satisfaction than it occasions Trouble, yet our Life is so short, and so incumber'd, that we can *make* but *little* of the enjoyment; so little, that 'tis not answerable to the meer Labour we undergo in acquiring it. All the *Morning* of our days is spent in the *Preliminaries of Learning*, in Learning Words and Terms of Art, wherein there is nothing but toil and drudgery, and before we can taste any of the *Fruits*

*Fruits* of the *Tree of Knowledge*, before we can relish what is *Intellectual* and *Rational* in it ; our Sun is got into the *Meridian*, and then it presently begins to *decline*, and our Learning with it ; our Light, our Strength, and our Time make haste to consume ; nothing increases now but the *Shadows*, that is, our Ignorance and Darkness of Mind ; and while we consider and look about us, the Sun Sets, and all is concluded in the Darkness and Shadow of Death. But often-times the Sun is intercepted by a *Cloud* long before it Sets, and we live backward again, grow weak and Childish, silly and forgetful, and unlearn faster than we learnt ; or if it chance to shine bright to the last, then we improve *too much*, and grow too wise for our selves, and reject the greatest part of what we learnt before, as idle and insignificant. So that we are under a Necessity of unlearning in a short time most of what we have so

dearly

dearly learnt, either through forgetfulness, or improvement of Judgment.

Fourthly, I consider, that there is no Necessity of our being so wonderfully Learned and Knowing here. 'Tis neither Necessary, as *injоyn'd* by God, nor as a *Means* to any considerable End. We can be *Good*, and we can be *Happy* without it. And as to the Interest of Communities and Publick Societies, 'tis *Civil Prudence* and *Honesty*, and not *Learning* which makes *them* Happy. *Rome* for the first five hundred years was without any Figure or Character for Learning, and yet it Flourish'd in all that time, and was a Pattern to the rest of the World both of *Vertue* and *Valour*. And lest any advantage in our *after-State* should be alledged for its Necessity, this makes it more unnecessary than any Consideration besides. For tho we are never so unlearned now, provided we know enough to do our Duty, and live

live well, we shall in a short time arrive to such a Degree of Knowledge as is requisite to our Supream Perfection, to which our Present Learning *cannot add*, and from which our Present Ignorance *will not Diminish*. I do not say this will be immediately upon our discharge from the Body, there being some reasonable Controversy about that, (which would be too great a *Digression* at present to pursue) tho 'tis most certain that even then there must needs be great *inlarge-ments* of Understanding: However 'tis most unquestionable that this our *Intellectual Accomplishment* can be no further off than our enjoyment of the *Beatific Vision*. We shall then commence instantaneously Wise and Learned, and be fully possess'd of the *Tree of Knowledge*, as well as of the *Tree of Life*. For then that *Glass* through which we now see *Darkly*, shall be laid aside; and there shall be no other but the *Speculum Deitatis*, the *Glass*

Glass of the Divinity, which is no other than the *Ideal World*, which shall be now more intimately united to us, and more clearly display'd before us. And tho even now there shall be Degrees of Knowledge, according to the various Participation of the Ideal Light; yet the variety of this Dispensation shall not proceed by the degree of our Knowledge in this Life, but by some other Measure. For,

## X. I.

*Fifthly*, I consider, that tho there is no necessity of our being so very Learned and Knowing, yet there is an Absolute Necessity of our being *Good* and *Vertuous*. This is Necessary both ways, as Commanded by God, and as a Means to our Final Perfection. And besides, 'tis necessary *now*, there being no other opportunity for it. If we don't know here, we may know hereafter; and shall infallibly do so if we are but *Good* here; but if we be not good here, we shall neither be

*Good*,

*Good, Happy, nor Knowing* hereafter. The Main Opportunity for Knowledge is *after this Life*, but the *only* opportunity for being good is *Now*. And if we take care to improve this, we are sufficiently secure of the other, and of whatever else appertains to the Perfection of our Natures. But if this be neglected, all is lost. This therefore is indispensably necessary, and 'tis the only thing that is so; and 'tis necessary *Now*, necessary not only to our *Happiness in General*, but also to that of our *Intellectual Part in Particular*. For,

### XII.

*Sixthly, And Lastly, I consider,* that thus stands the Case between *God and Man*: First, Man is supposed to be made in a state of Innocence and Perfection, in perfect Favour and Communion with God, his true Good, and in a Capacity so to continue. From this Excellent state he is supposed to *Fall*, and by his Fall so to *disable himself* that

that he cannot by his own strength Repent and Live well, and so to provoke God, that tho he *could* and *did Repent*, yet he would not be Pardon'd and Accepted, without Satisfaction made to Divine Justice. This Satisfaction Man is supposed not able to make, nor any other Creature for him. Whereupon God in great Mercy and Pity is supposed to ordain a *Mediator*, his own Son, God and Man, between himself and his *Laps'd Creature*, who by the Sacrifice of himself should Effect two things, answerable to the double Necessity of Man, first make Repentance available, which otherwise would not have been so; and secondly Merit Grace for him, that he might be able to *Repent*. And this is what we are to understand by the *Restoration* or *Redemption* of Man, which thus far is *Universal* and *Inconditionate*.

### XIII.

But still notwithstanding all that this *Mediator* hath done for him,  
Man

Man is supposed only so far restored, as to be put in a Pardonable and Reconcilable State (for as for our being *actually* and *immediately* reconciled by the Death of Christ, that's a silly, fond, *Antinomian* conceit, and no way consistent with the *Great Mystery of Godliness*) I say Man is yet only in a *Capacity* or Possibility of Pardon and Reconciliation, which is then, and then only reduced to *act*, when he actually performs the *Conditions* of Reconciliation, when he Believes, Repents, and leads a good Life, *with* which he *may*, and *without* which he *shall not* be Pardon'd and Saved, notwithstanding that Christ has Dy'd for him. The Design of whose Death was not to make a good Life *unnecessary*, but only to render it *Efficacious* and Available, not to procure a Priviledge of being saved *without* it, (as some fancy) but that we might be saved *with it*. If this Qualification be wanting, we shall be so far from being

being any thing *advantaged* from the Redemption purchas'd by our Mediator, that we shall be *Accountable* for it, to the great aggravation both of our Guilt and Misery. It therefore highly concerns Man to improve with all diligence this short and only opportunity *of making* his *Great Fortune*, to adorn his Mind with all Moral and Religious Perfections, and his Life with all good Actions, since with this he *may* be Happy in all his Capacities, and without it he shall not only fall into a state of unutterable Misery, but be also accountable for the *Possibility* he had of *escaping* it, for neglecting so great Salvation, so great an *Opportunity* of being saved.

## XIV.

These things being premised concerning the present *Hypothesis*, or state of Man, First, that he can there know but very *little*. Secondly, that even that little Knowledge which he can attain to, serves more

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to

to his Trouble than Satisfaction, and so is not only *Vanity*, but also *Vexation of Spirit*. Thirdly, that supposing it as Pleasant as may be, yet such is the shortness and incumbrance of his Life, that the enjoyment of it is not answerable to the Labour of acquiring it. Fourthly, That there is no Necessity of such a deal of Learning and Knowledge, either as to this World, or to the next, and that e're long he shall have his fill of Knowledge in the Beatifick Vision of the *Ideal World*, one Glance wherof shall instruct him more, than an Eternal poring upon all the Books in this, and *undistinguish* the greatest *Doctor* from the most ignorant Peasant. Fifthly, That there is an Absolute Necessity of his being *Good* and *Vertuous*, this being the condition not only of his Happiness in general, but also of the accomplishment of his *Understanding* in particular. And that Now is the only opportunity for it. Sixthly and Lastly,

Lastly, That the Attainment of Happiness and Intellectual Perfection upon this Condition was the Purchase of his Saviours Death, who has also Merited Grace for his assistance in the Performance of it. Which if he neglect, he shall not only miss of Happiness, but be also answerable for so Great and so Dear an opportunity of gaining it ; From these Premises 'twill, I think, follow with no less than *Mathematical Evidence*.

## XV.

First, that *Learning and Knowledge* is not the thing for which God design'd Man in this Station, nor consequently the *End or Reason* of his bestowing upon him those Intellectual and Rational Powers which he has. For had this been the *End and Design of God*, he would have made it more *possible* for him, and withal more his *Interest and Concern* to attain it.

Secondly, 'twill follow that the End for which God intended Man

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here, and the Reason why he made him a Rational Creature, was that he might live virtuously and well; so serve him here, that he might be rewarded with Happiness and *perfect Knowledge* hereafter; having furnish'd him with Intellectual Abilities sufficient for *this*, tho not for the *other*. Thirdly and Lastly, 'twill follow, that the principal care and concern of Man both because of his *own Interest*, and out of compliance with the *Designs* of God, ought to be to Live a good and regular Life, to accomplish the *Moral* part of his Nature, to subdue his Passions, to rectifie his Love, to study Purity of Heart and Life; in one word, to *perfect Holiness in the fear of God*, and (which is what we have been hitherto enquiring after) that he ought to busie himself in the Study of Learning and Knowledge no further, than as 'tis conducive to the Interest of *Religion* and *Vertue*.

## XVI.

This therefore is the *Measure* to  
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be observ'd in our prosecution of Learning and Knowledg. We are to Study only that we may be *Good*, and consequently ought to prosecute such Knowledge only as has an aptness to make us so, that which the Apostle calls *the Truth, which is after Godliness*. For that's the only business we have to do in this World. Whatever Knowledge we prosecute besides this, or further than 'tis conducive to this end, tho it be *absolutely* consider'd, never so excellent and perfective of our Rational part, yet with *respect* to the present posture and station of Man, 'tis a Culpable Curiosity, and an unaccountable Vanity, and only a more solemn and laborious way of being *Idle* and *Impertinent*.

## XVII.

And this will be found (if well examin'd) to be nothing different from the Censure of the Wife Preacher, *And I gave my Heart to know Wisdom*, says he, *and I perceiv'd that this also is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*. Not that he

now first applied himself to the study of Wisdom. No, he had been inspired with that before, and by the help of it had discover'd the Vanity of all other things. But that Wisdom which saw through all other things, did not as yet perceive the Vanity of it self. He therefore now gave his Heart to *Know* Wisdom, that is, to reflect upon it, and Consider whether this might be excepted from his general Censure, and struck out of the Scroll of Vanities. And upon deep reflection he found that it could not, and that even *this* also was as much a Vanity as any of the rest. Now this Proposition of *Solomon's* cannot be understood *Absolutely*, (Knowledge being an undoubted Perfection of Human Nature) but only with respect to the present posture of Man in this World. Neither can it be understood of *all* kind of Knowledge even in *this* Life, some kind of Knowledge being necessary to qualify him for Happiness

Happiness in the next. It must therefore Necessarily be understood of all *that* Knowledge which contributes not to that great End. So that from these two Necessary Limitations the Sense of Solomon's Proposition (if it have any) must be this ; that to Man in this present juncture all Knowledge that does not contribute to the interest of his After-state, is downright *Vanity* and *Vexation* of Spirit.

### XVIII.

For, to what purpose should we Study *so much*, considering that after all we are able to *know so little*? Considering that even that *little* is enough to trouble and disquiet us, considering that our Life is as much too short for the enjoying what Knowledge we *have*, as for compassing what we *would have* ; and withal considering that there lies no manner of Obligation or Necessity upon us to do thus. But (which is what I would most of all inculcate) to what purpose ima-

ginable should we be so busie, and vehement in the pursuit of Learning, of any Learning, but what is of use to the Moral Conduct of our Life, considering these two things, First, that 'tis but to stay a little while and we shall have all that Knowledge *Gratis*, from the Communications of the *Ideal World*, which we so *unsuccessfully drudge* for here, to the neglect of more important and concerning exercises. And Secondly, considering that there is such an absolute necessity of being *Good*, and of *Living well*, and that this short uncertain Life is the only time for it, which if neglected, this great work must lie undone for ever. Upon the *former* consideration this *Studious, Bookish* Humour, is like laying out a great Sum of Mony to purchase an Estate, which after one Weak, *dropping* Life will of Course fall into hand. And I am sure he would be reckon'd *Fool* or *Mad*, that should do so. And upon the *latter*,

'tis

'tis as if a Man that was Riding Post upon Business of *Life* and *Death*, should as he passes through a Wood, stand still to listen to the Singing of a *Nightingale*, and so forget the main and only business of his Journey.

## XIX.

'Tis most certain that the two Cases here supposed, are as great instances of Folly and Impertinence as can well be conceiv'd, and yet (however it comes to pass that we are not sensible of it) 'tis certain, that they are very applicable to the Intellectual Conduct of Human Life as 'tis generally managed. And tho' we are all ready enough to call such Men Fools as shall do as in the two mentioned instances is supposed, yet 'tis most certain that we do the very same or worse, that we are too much concern'd in the *Application* of the *Parable*, and that of most of us it may be truly said, *Thou art the Man.*

## XX.

## XX.

For I demand, what difference is there between him that now labours and toils for Learning and Knowledge, which in a little time he shall be *easily* and *fully* posseſt of, and him that dearly buys an Estate which would otherwise come to him after a short Interval? What difference is there, but only this, that he that buys the Estate, tho he might have *spared* his Mony, yet however he *gets* what he laid out his Mony for; his expence indeed was *needless*, but not in *vain*. Whereas he that drudges in the pursuit of Knowledge, not only *toils* for that which in a short time he shall have with *ease*, and in *abundance*, but which after all he *can't compass* in any considerable measure, and so undergoes a *vain* as well as *unnecessary* Labour; and is therefore the greater Fool.

## XXI.

Again I demand, What difference is there between him who when

when he is employ'd upon business of Life and Death shall alight from his Horse, and stand Idling to hear a *Nightingale* Singing in the Wood, and him who having an Eternity of Happiness to secure by the right ordering of his Life and Manners, and having only this *Point* of time to do it in, shall yet turn *Vertuoso*, and set up for Learning and *Curiosity*. 'Tis true indeed, the *Nightingale* Sings well, and 'twere worth while to stand still and hear him, were I disengaged from more concerning Affairs ; but not certainly when I am upon Life and Death. And so Learning and Knowledge are excellent things, and such as would deserve my Study, and my Time, had I any to *spare*, and were more at leisure ; but not certainly when I have so great an Interest as that of my Final State depending upon the good use of it. My Business now is not to be *Learned*, but to be *Good*.

## XXII.

For is my Life so long, am I so over-stock'd with Time, or is my depending Interest so little, or is it so easily secured, that I can find leisure for *unnecessary Curiosities*? Is this Conduct agreeable to the present station and posture of Man, whose entrance into this World, and whose whole stay in it, is purely in order to another state? Or would any one imagin this to be the condition of Man by such a Conduct! Shall a Prisoner who has but a few days allow'd him to make a Preparation for his Trial, spend that little opportunity in *Cutting and Carving*, and such like *Mechanical Contrivances*? Or would any one imagin such a Man to be in such a Condition, near a doubtful Trial of Life and Death, whom coming into a Prison he finds so employ'd? And yet is there any thing more Absurd and Impertinent in this, than in the present Supposition, to have a Man, who

who has so great a Concern upon his Hands as the Preparing for Eternity, all busie and taken up with Quadrants, and Telescopes, Furnaces, Syphons, and Air-Pumps ?

### XXXIII.

When we would expose any Signal Impertinence, we commonly illustrate it by the Example of *Archimedes*, who was busie in making Mathematical Figures on the Sands of *Syracuse*, while the City was taken by *Marcellus*, and so, though there were Particular Orders given for his Safety, lost his Life by his *unseasonable Study*. Now I confess there was impertinence and absurdity enough in this instance to consign it over to Posterity. But had *Archimedes* been a *Christian*, or otherwise assured of the Great Concerns of another World, I should have said, that the Main of his Impertinence did not lie *here*, in being Mathematically employ'd when the Enemy was taking the City, but in laying out

out his Thoughts and Time upon such an insignificant unconcerning Study, while he had no less a concern upon him, than the securing his Eternal Interest : Which must be done now or never. Nothing certainly is an *Impertinence*, if this be not, to hunt after Learning and Knowledge in such a *juncture* as this.

#### XXIV.

Sure I am, and your *Ladyship* too very well knows, that many other Proceedings in the Conduct of Life are condemn'd of Vanity and Impertinence upon the very same Grounds, tho not half so inconsistent with the Character of Man, nor so disagreeable to his present Posture in this World. For is not the World full of *Invectives*? And have not the Pens of *Moral Writers* been all along employ'd against those that apply themselves to Secular Acquirements, spend their short and uncertain Lives, which ought to be employ'd in the Pursuit

Pursuit of an infinitely higher Interest, in gaping up and down after Honours and Preferments, in long and frequent attendances at Court, in raising Families, getting Estates, and the like? These things I say, and such like, are condemn'd and censured, not only upon the stock of their *particular* Viciousness, as Crimes of *Ambition* or *Covetousness* respectively, but for what they have in *Common*, as they are mispendings of Time, and unconcerning *Excentrical* employments.

## XXV.

But now I would fain know, whether any of these *Misconducts* of Life be more expensive of our Time, more remote and alien from the main business of it, more *unrelating* to our Grand Concern, and consequently more *Impertinent*, than to be busily employ'd in the Necessities and Curiosities of Learning: And whether a Man that loiters away *Six Weeks* in *Court-Attendances* for a place of Honour, be not every

every whit as *accountably* employ'd with respect to the *End* of Man in the *other* World, and his *Business* in *this*, as he that shall spend so much time in the Solution of a *Mathematical Question*, as *M. Descartes* I remember confesses of himself in one of his *Epistles*. And why then the Prosecution of Learning should be the *only* thing *excepted* from the Vanities and Impertinences of Life, I have not Head enough to understand.

### XXVI.

And yet so it is. All other *Excentrical* unconcerning Occupations are cried down meerly for being so, as not according with the present Character and State of Man. This alone is not contented with the reputation of *Innocence*, but stands for *positive merit* and *excellence*, for *Praise* and *Commendation*. To say a Man is a Lover of Knowledge, and a diligent Inquirer after Truth, is almost as great an *Encomium* as you can give him, and

the time spent in the *Study*, tho  
in the search of *unedifying Truth*,  
is reckon'd almost as *laudably be-  
stow'd* as that in the *Chapel* ; and  
(so inconsistent with its self is  
Human Judgment) 'tis Learning  
only that is *allow'd* not only to  
*divide*, but to *devour* the greatest  
part of our short Life, and is the  
only thing that with *Credit* and  
*Publtc allowance* stands in *Compe-  
tition* with *Religion* and the study of  
*Vertue*. Nay, by the most is pre-  
ferr'd before it, who would rather  
be counted *Learned* than *Pious*.

XXVII.

But is not this a strange and unreasonable Competition? It must indeed be confess'd, that the Perfection of Man is *double*, of the Intellectual as well as of the Moral Part, and that Knowledg is a very Divine Excellence. But certainly Rightitude of *Will* is a greater Ornament and Perfection than Brightness of *Understanding*, and to be Good is more Divine than to be

L Wise

Wise and Knowing, that being the Principal, perhaps only difference between an Angel and a Devil. And tho Solomon's Choice be universally applauded, yet I think that of Mary is to be preferr'd before it, and (to use the Expression of the Excellent Monsieur Poiret) that 'tis better like an Infant without much reasoning to love much, than like the Devil to Reason much without Love.

## XXVIII.

But suppose Knowledge were a much Diviner Excellence than 'tis, suppose it were more perfective of, and Ornamental to Human Nature, than the Habit and Practice of Vertue; yet still this Competition would be utterly against Reason. For 'tis to be consider'd (as I have already suggested) that the Former we can't have now in any Measure, and shall have it hereafter without Measure; but the latter we may have now (for we may Love much tho we can't know much) and cannot have it hereafter. Now the Question

Cogitat.  
Ration.  
*de Deo.*  
p. 622.

Question is, whether we ought to be more Solicitous for that *Intellectual Perfection* which we can't have here, and shall have hereafter; or for that *Moral Perfection* which we may have here, and cannot hereafter? And I think we need not consult an Oracle, or conjure up a Spirit to be resolv'd of this Question.

## XXIX.

And this one *Solitary Consideration* (much more in *Conjunction* with the other parts of the *Human Character*) I take to be sufficient to justify the *Truth* of what *measure* we have prescribed to our *Intellectual Conduct*, that we ought to prosecute *Learning* and *Knowledge* no further than as 'tis conducive to the great Ends of *Piety* and *Vertue*. And consequently that whenever we study to any other Purpose, or in any other Degree than this, we are unaccountably impertinently, I may add *Sinfully* employ'd. For this is the *whole of*

Eccles. 12. *Man, to fear God and keep his Commandments,* the whole of Man in this Station, and consequently this ought to be the only Scope of all his Studies and Endeavours.

## XXX.

And accordingly 'tis observable that the Scripture, whenever it makes mention of *Wisdom* with any mark of *Commendation*, it always means by it either the very Practice of Religion and Virtue, or such Knowledge at least, that has a near and strong influence upon it; thereby implying, that that is the only *Wisdom* which becomes the Study of Man. Remarkable above the rest to this purpose is the 28th Chapter of *Job*, where having run through several Instances of *Natural Knowledge*, at length, says he, *But where shall Wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?* As much as to say, that in none of the other things mention'd did consist the *Wisdom* of *Man*. Then it follows, *Man knoweth not*

V. 12.

V. 13.

the price thereof, neither is it found  
in the Land of the Living, The V. 14.  
Depth saith, it is not in me, and the  
Sea saith it is not in me. Not in  
the Depths of Learnings, nor in  
the Recesses of Speculation, seeing  
it is hid from the Eyes of all  
Living, and kept close from the Fowls  
of the Air, from Men of high and  
Towring Notions, and sublime  
Theories. *Destruction and Death* V. 22.  
say, we have heard the Fame thereof  
with our Ears. As much as to say,  
that after this Life, and then only,  
unless perhaps about the hour of  
Death, Men begin to have a true  
Sense, and lively savoury Relish of  
this Wisdom. But in the mean  
time, *God understandeth the way* V. 23.  
thereof, and he knoweth the place  
thereof. And unto Man he said, be- V. 28.  
bold the Fear of the Lord, that is  
Wisdom, and to depart from Evil,  
that is Understanding. To Man he  
said; Had it been to another Crea-  
ture, suppose an Angel, in a state  
of Security and Confirmation, he

would perhaps have recommended for Wisdom the Study of Nature, and the Curiosities of Philosophy, but having to do with *Man*, a *probationary* and *unfixt* Creature, that shall be either Happy or Miserable, according as he demeans himself in this short time of Trial, the only Wisdom he advises to *such* a Creature in *such* a Station, is to look well to his *Moral Conduct*, to study Religion and good Life.

## XXXI.

And now (*Madam*) since we are upon *Scripture Authority* (for indeed so little has this matter been consider'd, that I have scarce any other to follow) will your *Ladyship* give me leave in further Confirmation of the *Measure* propos'd, to commend to your Consideration two great *Scripture-Examples*, both of Men Eminently Wise, and of a Learned Education. The Men I instance in are *Moses* and *St. Paul*. The latter of which professedly declares, that he *determin'd to know nothing*

nothing, but Jesus Christ, and him Crucify'd, that is, nothing but what concerns either the Faith or the Practice of Christianity. And the former complaining of the gross Ignorance of the People committed to his Charge, and desiring they would become wiser, breaks out into this Passionate Wish, *O that* <sup>Deut. 32.</sup> *they were wise, that they under-* <sup>29.</sup> *stood this, that they would consider their latter End.*

## XXXII.

*Moses* had been bred a *Scholar*, as well as a *Courtier*, and was well instructed in all the *Secrets* of the *Egyptian Philosophy*, which was then the best in the *World*. Besides, he was himself a wise *Man*, *ya* *Man*, that besides the Advantages of *Pharaoh's* Court, had the Divine ~~λόγος~~ himself for his *Tutor*, and convers'd personally with his *Maker*, and therefore must needs be supposed to know what was true *Wisdom*. But now this he does not make to consist either in the

Accomplishments of Courtly Education, or in the deep Mysteries of Philosophy, but in the consideration of our latter End. He wishes that his People were *Wise*, and to this End he does not wish that they were as *Well-bred* as he, or as *Learned* as he, but only that they understood this, this one thing, that they would consider their latter End. Which he makes the Summary and Abstract of all Wisdom. Much like that of *Plato*, when he defines Philosophy to be, *The Theory of Death*.

### XXXIII.

And here, if your *Ladyship* will dispense with a short Digression, a Digression from the immediate *Thred* of my Discourse, tho not from the *General Design* of it, I would upon this occasion briefly represent to you what an excellent part of Wisdom it is for Man seriously to consider his latter End. To make this distinctly appear, I shall proceed upon these two grounds:

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grounds: First, That the Consideration of Death is the most proper Exercise that a wise Man can be employ'd about. And Secondly, that this is the most compendious way of making him wise that is not so.

## XXXIV.

And First, it is the most proper exercise that a wise Man can employ himself about. For Wisdom consists in a due estimation of things ; and then things are duly estimated, when they are measured and rated, first as they are *absolutely* in *themselves* ; and secondly, as they stand in *Relation to us*. If they are great and extraordinary, then they deserve to be consider'd for *their own sakes* ; and if they nearly relate to us, then they deserve to be consider'd for *ours*. And upon both these accounts, Death and its Consequences are highly deserving a Wise Man's Thoughts and Reflections.

## XXXV.

## XXXV.

For first, they are great and extraordinary Transactions, barely as in themselves consider'd, and as such would deservedly engage the most attentive consideration, even of a stander-by, of any other *indifferent* Being, suppose an *Angel*, that can be no otherwise concerned in it, than as 'tis a *great Event*, a *Noble Scene* of Providence, a matter of *Wonder* and *Curiosity*. I say, upon this single Account, Death with its Consequences is as fit a Subject for the Contemplation of a Wise Man as any in Nature.

## XXXVI.

Or if there be within the Sphere of *Nature* things of a greater and more *Bulky* appearance, yet certainly there is nothing wherein Man is so nearly concern'd, so highly interested as in Death. Since upon the manner of this depends his *Eternal Happiness* or *Ruin*. There is therefore nothing that so much deserves to be consider'd by him.

him. Whether therefore we regard the Absolute greatness of the thing, or its Relative greatness with respect to us, as we are interested and concerned in it, but especially if we weigh *both*, the consideration of Death is as proper an Exercise as a Wise Man can be employ'd about.

## XXXVII.

And as 'tis so fit an employment for him that is Wise already, so secondly, is it the most compendious way of making him wise, truly wise, that is not so. For all Wisdom is in Order to *Happiness*, and to be truly wise, is to be *Wise unto Salvation*. Whatever Knowledge contributes not to this, is quite beside the Mark, and is, as the Apostle calls it, *Science falsely so called*. The Knowledge it self is *vain*, and the Study of it is *impertinent*.

## XXXVIII.

Now the only way to Happiness is a good Life, and consequently all Wisdom being in Order to Happiness, that's the only Wisdom that serves

serves to the promoting of good Life, according to that of Job before cited, *And to man he said, behold the fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.* That therefore is the most compendious way of making a Man *wise*, that soonest makes him *good*, and reduces his Mind to a *moral Regularity*. And nothing does this so soon and so well as the serious and habitual consideration of Death. And therefore, says the wise Man, *Remember Death and Corruption, and keep the Commandments.* The shortest Compendium of holy living that ever was given. As if he had said, Many are the Precepts and Admonitions left us by wise and good Men, for the moral Conduct of Life ; but would you have a *short* and infallible *Directory* of living well ? why, remember *Death* and *Corruption* ; Do but remember this, and forget all other *Rules* if you *will*, and your *Duty* if you *can*.

## XXXIX.

And what is here remarked by one wise Man is consented to by *all*. Hence those common Practices among the Ancients, of placing Sepulchres in their Gardens, and of using that celebrated Motto, *Memento mori*. Hence also that Modern as well as Ancient Custom of putting *Emblems of Mortality* in *Churches*, and other *Public places*, by all which 'tis implied, that the Consideration of Death is the greatest security of a good Life. As indeed it must be upon this general ground, because it does that at a *Blow*, which other Considerations do by *Parts*, and gives an entire defeat to the three great Enemies of our Salvation at once. It sets us above the Temptations of the *World*, the *Flesh*, and the *Devil*. For how can the *World* captivate him, who considers he is but a stranger in it, and that he must shortly leave it ! How can the *Flesh* insnare him, who has his Sepulchre always in his Eye, and

and reflects upon the *cold Lodging* he shall have there ! And how can the Devil prevail upon him, who remembers always he must *die*, and then enter upon an unchangeable State of Happiness or Misery, according as he has either *resisted* or *yielded to his Temptations* ! Of so vast consequence is the constant Thinking upon Death above all other things that fall within the compass even of *useful* and *Practical* Meditation, and so great Reason had *Moses* for placing the Wisdom of Man in the *Consideration* of his *latter End*.

## XL.

But to return (if being still in pursuit of my General Design, I may well be said to be out of the way) I now perswade my self that from the Character I have drawn of Man and his present Circumstances, together with those Reflections built upon it, and interwoven with it ; and lastly, from *Divine Authority*, the Measure we have given

given, is so well Establish'd, that if your *Ladyship* be not yet, you ought to be convinc'd, that however Naturally desirous we may be of Knowledge, yet that *this Appetite* is to be govern'd as well as those that are *Sensual*; that we ought to indulge it only so far as may tend to the Moralizing our Souls, and the conducting our Lives, and the fitting us for that Happiness which God has promised not to the *Learned*, but to the *Good*. And that if it be gratify'd to any other purpose, or in any other *Measure* than this, our Curiosity is impertinent, our study immoderate, and the *Tree of Knowledge* still a *forbidden Plant*.

## XLI.

And now (*Madam*) having fix'd and stated the *Measure* of our present *Affection to*, and *Inquiry after Learning and Knowledge*, which I think is establish'd upon *irrefutable Principles*, I may leave it to your *Ladyship* to consider how much 'tis observ'd

observ'd in the general Conduct of our Studies. 'Tis plain that 'tis not observ'd at all. For these two things are too Notorious to need any more for their Proof, than only to look abroad into the World. First, that very little of that which is generally made the Subject of Study, has any manner of Tendency to Living well here, or Happily hereafter. And Secondly, that these very Studies which have no Religious or Moral influence upon Life, do yet devour the greatest part of it. The *Best* and *Most* of our Time is devoted to *Dry Learning*, this we make the *Course* of our Study, the rest is only by the *by*, and 'tis well if what is Devotional, Practical, or Divinely-relishing, can find us at leisure upon a Broken piece of a *Sunday* or *Holiday*. But the main *Current* of our Life runs in Studies of another Nature, that don't so much as glance one *kind* Aspect upon good Living, 'tis well if some of them don't hinder it.

I am sure St. Austin thought so, *Confess.*  
and makes it part of his *Penitentials.* Lib. i.c. 16.

## XLII.

And because the *Authority* of so Great and so Good a Man may convince some, whom the clearest *Discourse* would leave unperswaded, it may be of some Use and Consequence to let the Reader see how he expresses himself upon this Occasion. Speaking of the Institution and Discipline of his Youth, says he, *I learnt in those things many useful Words, but the same might also be learnt in matters that are not vain, and that indeed is the safe way wherein Children ought to be train'd up.* But *Wo unto thee thou Torrent of Human Custom ! Who is able to resist thee ? How long will it be before thou wilt be dried up ? How long wilt thou roll along the Sons of Eve into a great and formidable Sea, which they can hardly pass over ? Have not I read in thee Jupiter both Thundering and Fornicating at the*

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same time? &c. And yet O thou Hellish Torrent, the Sons of Men are still tossed in thee, and are invited by Rewards to learn these things. Your Pretence indeed is, That this is the way to learn Words, and to get Eloquence, and the Art of Perswasion. As if we should not know these Words, Golden Showr, Lap, Cheat, the Temple of Heaven, &c. unless Terence had brought in a lewd young Man proposing Jupiter to himself as a President for Whoring, while he beheld in a Wall a Piece representing how Jupiter conveigh'd himself into the Lap of Danae in a golden Showr, and so cheated the poor Woman. But see how the young Man encourages himself to Lust by this Heavenly President: What God is this, says he? Even he that shakes with Thunder the Temple of Heaven; and shall I then a poor Mortal stick to do the same? Now this Immorality does not at all advantage the learning of the Words, but the Words do greatly encourage the committing of the Immorality

morality. Not that I find fault with the Words themselves, they are pure and choice Vessels, but with that Wine of Error which in them is handed and commended to us by our sottish Teachers: And yet unless we drank of it we were beaten, nor had we any sober Judge to appeal to. And yet I, O my God, in whose Presence I now securely make this Recollection, willingly learnt these things, and like a Wretch was delighted with my Exercise, and for this I had the Name of a Good, Towardly, Hopeful Boy.

By this you may see what the Judgment of this Holy and Venerable Person was in his private Retirements, and at the most serious Intervals of his Life, concerning the general Course of those Studies, which draw out the *First Runnings* of our Age, and which are of so great Credit and Authority in the World, as to go under the Name of *Ingenuous* and *Liberal Education*. You see he not only condemns and disparages them, but reckons them

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among those Sins and Irregularities of his Youth, whereof he thought himself obliged to make a particular Confession in this his *Great Penitential*.

### XLIII.

And here let me not be thought Immodest, if upon great Consideration and full Conviction, I presume to tax the Management of our Publick Schools in the Institution of Youth. Many Miscarriages I might note, but I shall concern my self only with such, as from the Principles laid down, I am led to condemn: Which I comprehend under these two General Heads of Complaint.

I. That they take up so much Time in their Education.

II. That they teach them such frivolous and unprofitable things as they do.

In relation to the First, I cannot with any Patience reflect, that out of

of such a short Compafs of time, as that of Human Life, consisting it may be of 50 or 60 Years, (for where one lives longer Hundreds come short) 19 or 20 shall be spent between the *Dictionary* and the *Lexicon*, in hammering out a little Latin and Greek, and in learning a Company of Poetical Fictions and Phantaſtic Stories. If these things were never ſo fit and neceſſary to be known, yet 'tis Barbarous and Inhuman to make People ſpend ſo much of their little Stock of Time upon them. This is to make a Cure of Human Ignorance, and to deal with the Infirmitiess of the *Mind*, as ſome ill Surgeons do by the Wounds of the *Body*: And, it may be, for the ſame Reason. If one were to judge of the Life of Man by that Proportion of it that is ſpent at School, one would think the *Antediluvian* Mark were not yet out, and that we had a Prospect of at leaſt 900 or a 1000 years

before us. The Truth is, 'tis an intolerable Abuse that it should be so ; and I wonder that the Wisdom and Authority of this improv'd Age of the World will let it be so ; especially considering what late Examples we have had of more compendious Methods beyond the Seas. It does not become me, nor am I so fond of the Office of an *Undertaker*, as to project a Scheme of School-Discipline ; I leave this to more contriving Heads. Only in the mean time I may venture to say, that the common way is a very great *Tax* upon Human Life : For certainly the short Life of Man can very ill spare so large a Portion of it to be lavish'd away upon the first Elements of Learning ; and I believe, when all things are computed, this will be found to be the most *chargeable* part of Education.

But my greatest Quarrel against the Wisdom of these Seminaries, is the frivolousness of the things they

they teach. I blame them not only for taking too great a Compass for the Instruction of Youth in the things they teach them, but for teaching them such things at all. Men may make Mony of *Leather* if they will, by giving it a *Current Stamp*: But setting aside Opinion and Fancy, what real Improvement or Perfection is it to the Mind of a Rational Creature, to be overlaid with Words and Phrases, and to be full charged with Poetical Stories, Dreams and Fancies? How many excellent and useful things might be learnt in the *Mathematics*, and other ingenious and profitable Sciences, while Boys are *Thumming* and *Murthering* *Hesiod* and *Homer*, which then they do not understand, and which when they do, they will throw by and despise: And that justly too. For of what signification is such *Stuff* as this, if the Humour of the World had not turn'd it up for Learning, to the real Acccomplish-

ment of a Reasonable Soul? What Improvement or Perfection can it be to my Understanding to know the Amours of *Pyramus* and *Thysbe*, or the Adventures of *Hero* and *Leander*? Do Men retain any value for these things when they grow up and know better, or endeavour to preserve the Memory of them? Do they not rather studiously forget them, and cast them aside? And is it not reckon'd an ungenteel piece of *Pedantry* to make use of them either in Writing or Conversation? And why then must Poor Boys be condemned with so much Pains and Drudgery to learn such things, which when they are Men they must and will unlearn again? I ask again, and 'tis a very pertinent Question, why must Boys be forc'd with so great expence of Time and Labour, to learn such things as are of no standing constant use? So far from that, that they are dangerous and hurtful, as well

as unprofitable. For I appeal to the common Sense and Experience of Mankind, whether it be advisable to entertain the gay *Catching Fancies of Boys* with the Amorous Scenes of the Poets. Whether it be convenient or safe to season their green Imaginations with such impure and obscene Images as are there set forth to the Life: Or is not this rather the direct way to corrupt them, to sow in their tender Minds the Seeds of Impurity, and to lay a standing Foundation for Debauchery? Let any Man but consider Human Nature as it comes down to us from *Adam*, and tell me, whether he thinks that a Boy is fit to be trusted with *Ovid de Arte Amandi*. For my part I should as soon and sooner trust him with a Conjuring-Book. For I think he were better raise the Devil *without* him, than raise a Devil *within* him. I do not condemn this sort of Learning out of Ignorance; for I my self had my Educa-

Education in a very eminent School, that of *Winchester*, where I made no small Proficiency in *Classic Learning*, as 'tis call'd; and I have since plied it very hard, and run through all the *Criticisms* of it. But upon a serious Review I take no Satisfaction either in those Studies, or in those Acquirements: Nay, I am so far from that, that I heartily wish that sort of Vain Learning (after all my pains in it) were quite out of Credit, and that the Books that contain it had the same Fate in *our Commonwealth*, that the *Authors* of them had in *Plato's*. For I do not understand upon what Principle, either of Prudence or Piety, such Books as these should be read by *any*, but especially by *Boys*; nor why such Pains should be taken, and so much Diligence used to make them understand 'em. I think they were better continue Ignorant, than to accomplish their Understandings with the hazard of

of their Morals, upon which such Studies as these can derive no very wholsom Influence. And yet to these our Youth is dedicated, and in these some of us employ our riper Years ; nor do we see the Vanity and Impertinence of it in old Age. And then when we die, this very thing makes one great part of our *Funeral Elegy*, that we were so diligent and indefatigable in our Studies, and so inquisitive in the search of Knowldg, perhaps that we procured an *early interment* by it, when, according to the Principles before laid down, we were as impertinently employ'd all the while, as if we had been so long picking Straws in *Bedlam*. I say as *impertinently*, tho perhaps not so *innocently*. The Sum of all comes to this : The measure of prosecuting Learning and Knowledge is their usefulness to good Life. Consequently all Prosecution of it beyond or beside this End, is impertinent and immoderate.

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This has been fully proved by evident Principles. But now of this sort is the general Prosecution of Learning and Knowledge, as is plain by appealing to the general Conduct of Study. The Conclusion therefore unavoidably follows, That the Intellectual Conduct of Human Life is justly chargeable with an immoderate and impertinent pursuit of Knowledge. Which was the Proposition to be made out, and I am *sorry* to see it so well proved.

*The End of the Third Reflection.*

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## The Conclusion.

AND now (Madam) having finisht my *Threefold Reflection* upon the Intellectual Conduct of Human Life, I have a double Application to make, one to your *Ladyship*, and another to *my self*. That to your *Ladyship* is this, that you would consider to what a narrow compass, by virtue of the preceding Discourses, these three things are reduced, which before use to take up so large a room, *viz Learning it self, the Method of Learning, and the Desire and Prosecution of Learning*. The first of which is comprised within the Limits of *Necessary Truth*; the second within those of *Thinking, Purity and Prayer*; the third within its *usefulness to the furtherance of good Life*. These indeed are great *retrenchments*, but I think such as are just and necessary to the Regulation of our Intellectual

lectual Conduct, which I am glad to find so compendious and disburden'd, that being a Mark of no small Probability to confirm me in the Truth of it, as the *Rightest Line* is always the *Shortest*.

And since both *Learning* it self, its *Method*, and limits of *Prosecution* are all so reduced, I would further commend to your *Ladyships* Consideration, whether from this great *Abridgment* you can forbear deducing these two *Corollaries*: First, That this *Bookish Humour*, which every where so prevails, is one of the *Spiritual Dyscrasies*, or *Moral Diseases* of Mankind, one of the most *Malignant Reliques* of Original Depravation; it carrying in it the very *Stamp* and *Signature* of *Adam's Transgression*, which owed its Birth to Curiosity, and inordinate desire of Knowledge. Secondly, that those who *have Eyes* may in a great measure *spare* them, and that those who *have not*, should not, upon the account of *Learning*, much

much *lament* the want of them, which is therefore addressed to the Private Consideration of all those that labour under that sad Misfortune.

Now as to my own *particular* Concern, the Result of what I have written is this: I am so *inwardly* and *throughly* convinc'd of the certainty of those Principles I have here laid down, that I think I am not only under a particular *Obligation*, but almost under a *Necessity* of conducting my Studies according to the Measures proposed. The *last* of which has left such a strong influence, such a deep impression upon me, that I think I shall now follow the Advice of the Heathen (*M. Antonius* as I remember) *την δὲ Βιβλίων διθαν φιλον, rid my self of the Thirst after Books*, and study nothing but what serves to the advancement of Piety and Good Life.

I have now spent about Thirteen years in the most celebrated University

University in the World, and, according to the ordinary Measures, perhaps not amiss, having accomplish'd my self in a competent degree, both with such Learning as the *Academical Standard* requires, and with whatever else my own *Private Genius* inclined me to. But truly I cannot say that I have order'd my Studies in *that Theatre of Learning*, so much to my own *Satisfaction*, as to my *Reputation with others*. To be free with you, I must declare, that when I reflect upon my past *Intellectual Conduct*, I am as little satisfied with it as I am with that of my *Morals*, and that I think I have nigh as much to answer for the *Former*, as I have for the *Latter*, being very Conscious, that the greatest part of it has been employ'd in *Unconcerning Curiosities*, such as derive no moral influence upon the Soul that contemplates them.

But I have now (if I sufficiently understand my self) a very different

rent Taste and Apprehension of things, and intend to spend my *uncertain remainder* of time in studying only such things as make for the Moral improvement of my Mind, and the Regulation of my Life, not being able to give an account upon any rational and consistent Principles, why I should study any thing else.

More *particularly* I think I shall chiefly apply my self to the Reading of such Books as are rather *Persuasive* than *Instructive*, such as are Sapid, Pathetic and Divinely-relishing, such as warm, kindle and enlarge the *Interior*, and awaken the *Divine Sense* of the Soul, as considering with my self that I have now, after so much Reading and Speculation, more need of *Heat* than of *Light*. Tho if I were for more *Light* still, I think this would prove the best *Method* of *Illumination*, and that when all's done, the *Love* of God is the best *Light* of the Soul. For I consider

Via com- with the Excellent Cardinal Bona,  
 pendii ad That a Man may have Knowledge  
 Deum. P. without Love. But he that Loves,  
 172. altho he wants Sciences humanly ac-  
 quired, yet he will know more than  
 Human Wisdom can teach him, be-  
 cause he has that Master within who  
 teaches Man Knowledge. Purity of  
 Heart and Life being one of the  
 Methods of Consulting the Ideal  
 World, as was shewn in the Second  
 Part.

And now (Madam) I cannot well  
 presage how your *Ladyship* will  
 relish this *Renunciation* of all Studies  
*Meerly Curious*, from one whom  
 you apprehended (perhaps upon  
 too just grounds) to have been so  
 naturally disposed to them, and so  
 deeply engaged in them. Perhaps  
 you'll say I am already *Countryfy'd*  
 since I left the *University*. How  
 far that *Metamorphosis* may seize  
 upon me, I can't yet tell; if Soli-  
 tude and Retirement be enough  
 to bring it, I am, I confess, in great  
 Danger, being now got into a

*little*

little Corner of the World, where I must be more Company to my self than I have been ever yet. But the best on't is, I have not been so great a Stranger to my own Company *all along*, as to fear any great alteration by it now. Nor do I think the Management of the Present Undertaking a *sign* of any such change.

Whether I should have had the same Thoughts in the *University* or no, I can't say; I rather believe they are owing to my *Country-Retirement* (as I hinted in the Beginning) but however that be, sure I am they were entertain'd upon the deepest and severest Considerations; and I believe are so *well grounded*, that the more your *Ladyship considers*, the more you will be convinc'd both of the *Truth* of what I have *Discours'd*, and of the *Reasonableness* of what I *design*; which is to devote my self wholly to the accomplishment of my *Moral* part, and of my *Intellectual*, only so

far as is Subservient to the other.

And now (*Madam*) having bid farewell to all *unconcerning* Studies, all the dry and usavoury parts of Learning, 'tis high time to take my Leave of your *Ladyship* too ; which I do with this *Hope*, that you are by this time in some measure *Convinc'd*, as well as *Enter-tain'd*, by what has been suggested to your Consideration in the foregoing Discourses. And with this *Assurance*, that if these Discourses be too *Weak* to bring you over to my *present* Opinion, they will however prove *strong* enough to work you into a *Better*, which is to *believe*, that I still continue in all Reality,

Your Ladyships

Most Faithful Friend

and Servant,

*Newton St. Loe,*  
*Sept. 2. 1689.*

*John Norris.*

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## POSTSCRIPT.

Being inform'd that the Quakers took great hold of the former Edition of this Book, giving out that it made for their way, I think it convenient in a few Words to undeceive them, lest they should reckon upon more Proselytes than they have. I suppose, if the Quakers understood their own Notion, and knew how to explain it, and and into what Principles to resolve it, it would not very much differ from mine. But as they usually represent it, the difference I conceive to be very great; and he that thinks I symbolize with the Quakers in my Notion of the Divine Light, understands neither Me nor Them, as may appear by these following Instances of Difference.

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I. The Quakers usually talk of this Light within, as of some Divine *Communication* or *Manifestation* only, whereas I make it to be the very *Essence* and *Substance* of the Deity, which I suppose Vertually to contain all things in it, and to be intimately united to our Minds.

II. The Quakers represent this Light within, as a sort of *Extraordinary Inspiration* ( whence they have the Name of *Enthusiasts* ) whereas I suppose it to be a Man's *Natural* and *Ordinary* way of Understanding.

III. The Quakers (if I mistake not) confine their Light within, to some certain Objects, namely Moral and Spiritual Truths, in order only to the Direction of Practice, and accordingly make it a Supplement to *Scripture*, which they say is not *sufficient* without it, nor indeed any more than a meer *Dead Letter*: But now I do not appropriate this Divine Light to Moral

or

or Spiritual things, but extend it as far as all Truth ; yea, as far as all that is Intelligible, which I suppose to be perceiv'd and understood in this Divine Light, as I have explain'd it.

IV. The Quakers make their Light within, a special Priviledge of a certain Order of Men, their own Party. Not indeed as to the *Possibility*, because they suppose all Men to be indifferently capable of this Divine Illumination, as may appear from their contending against Predestination, and for universal Grace. But tho they do not make it a special Priviledge as to the *Possibility*, yet they do as to the *Act*, making none but those of their own Way to be actually enlightened by it. Whereas according to my Principles this is no special Priviledge, but the common and universal Benefit of all Men ; yea, of all the Intelligent Creation, who all see and understand in this Light of God, without which

there would be neither *Truth* nor *Understanding*.

V. The Quakers by their Light within, understand some determinate, *Formid* Dictate or Proposition, expressly and positively directing and instructing them to do so or so : Whereas my Light is only the *Essential* Truth of God, which indeed is always present to my Understanding, as being intimately united with it, but does not formally inlighten or instruct me, but when I carefully attend to it and Consult it , and read what is written in those Divine Ideal Characters.

VI. And Lastly, The Quakers do not offer any rational or intelligible Account of their Light within, neither as to the thing, nor as to the Mode of it, but only *Cant* in some loose general Expressions about the *Light*, which they confirm with the Authority of St. John's Gospel, tho they understand neither one nor t'other. Whereas I have

have offer'd a Natural, Distinct and Philosophical way of explaining both, namely by the Omnipresence of the Ideal World, or the Divine  $\lambda\beta\gamma\mathcal{Q}$ , who has in himself the Essences and Ideas of all things, and in whom the same are perceiv'd by us and all Creatures.

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SERMON

Preach'd in the

ABBY CHURCH

OF

BATH,

BEFORE THE

Right Reverend Father in GOD,

THOMAS,  
Lord Bishop of *BATH*  
and *WELLS*:

At his VISITATION held  
there *July 30. 1689.*

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By *John Norris*, M.A. and late Fellow of  
*All-Souls College in Oxford.*

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*London, Printed in the Year 1690.*

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John 21. v. 15.

So when they had Dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon Son of Jonas, Lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea Lord; Thou knowest that I Love thee. He saith unto him; Feed my Lambs.

THE Words consist of Three considerable parts. First, of Question put by our Lord to St. Peter. Secondly, of St. Peter's Answer. Thirdly, of a Command by way of inference from it. The Question was, Whether St. Peter Loved him beyond the rest of his Disciples then present. This Demand

mand of our Lord was not so high as were St. Peter's former *Profession* and *Pretensions*. This warm and Zealous Apostle had always profess'd a more than Ordinary Adhesion to his Lord and Master, and pretended to as great a *Supremacy* of *Love*, as his Successors do of *Knowledge* and *Jurisdiction*. He seem'd to be among the *Apostles* what the *Seraphim* are among the *Angels*, to out-shine and out-burn not this or that vulgar Disciple only, but the whole Apostolical Order in Zeal, Courage, and Flames of *Divine Love*. For no less can that Eminent Profession of his import, *Tho all Men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended*. But not having made good his high *Pretensions*, our Lord now puts the Question to him in terms more moderate than those wherein he had before voluntarily boasted of his own *Fidelity*; and whereas he had before made shew of a *Superlative Love* beyond *All the*

Mat. 26.33.

the Disciples, our Lord only asks him this Modest Question, *Lovest thou me more than these?*

The good Apostle having now partly from the late experiment of his own frailty, and partly from the manner of our Lords Question, learnt more Humility and Modesty, returns such an Answer as was short, not only of his *former Professions*, but even of the *Question* too. He does not reply, *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee more than these.* No, he dares not venture any more so much as to *determin* any thing concerning the *Measure* of his Love, but is contented barely to aver the *Truth*, and *Sincerity* of it. And for this he fears not to appeal at last to the *Divine Omniscience*, *Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.*

Our Lord takes the Answer, and does not at all question the *Truth* and *Sincerity* of it, only he gives him a *Test* whereby it might be

be tried and justified, both before *God, himself,* and the *World,* by subjoyning this Illative Command, *Feed my Lambs,* as it is in the Text, or as in the two following Verses, *Feed my Sheep.*

This whole intercourse between our Lord and St. Peter, may I conceive, as to the full stress and scope of it, fitly be reduced to this short *Hypothetical Scheme* of Speech, *If thou lovest me, feed my Sheep.* Like that of our Saviour, upon another occasion, to his Disciples in common, *If ye love me, keep my Commandments.* This under a shorter view takes in the full force of the Words, and I shall accordingly discourse upon them, as if they had stood in this Posture.

Hence then shall I take occasion to consider these three things, as naturally arising from the Words, and as no less pertinent to our present Concern.

First, The great Love of our Lord Christ

Christ to his Church, which he here calls *his Lambs, and his Sheep*, which he here commands St. Peter as he loved him, to feed; and which lastly, he would not absolutely and finally commit to his Charge, till after *three distinct Inquiries* whether he truly loved him.

Secondly, I shall consider the *Command* here given, and shew the great Obligation that lies upon all spiritual Pastors and Guides of Souls to feed this Flock of Christ, which is so dearly beloved by him.

Thirdly, I shall consider the *Connexion* and *Dependance* that is between the *Practice* of this Command and the *Love* of Christ. *If thou lovest me, feed my Sheep.*

Lastly, I shall close all with an earnest exhortation to the Conscientious Practice of the Duty enjoyed.

The first thing I shall consider is the great *Love* of Christ to his Church. And certainly if there be any *Secret* in Religion fit for

O Angels

Angels to Contemplate, and too high for them to comprehend; if there be any Love that has Breadth and Length, and Depth, and Height, if there be any Love that passes Knowledge, if there be any love that is stronger than Death, and dearer than Life, if there be any, lastly, that is truly wonderful, and that passes love not only of Women, but of the whole Creation, 'tis this Love of our Lord to his Church. We have no Line long enough to fathom so vast a Depth, nor can Mortality furnish us with Ideas to conceive, or with Words to utter so deep a Mystery. If there be any words that can reach it, they must be such as St. Paul heard in his Rapture, strange Words, *ἄγνωτα φραζαὶ*, Words that cannot be pronounced by an Human Tongue, and that would be meer Barbarism to a Moral Capacity.

But however, that we may take some Measure of that which really has none, and be able to frame some

some Notion of this Love of Christ, which, as the Apostle tells us, *passes knowledge*, we will exhibit a Prospect of it in a *Double Light*: First, Ephes. 3, in those verbal Representations<sup>19</sup>. which the Scripture gives of it: And Secondly, in those real and actual Proofs whereby Christ himself has express<sup>t</sup> this his most excellent, and otherwise *incredible Love*.

As to the First: The Scripture we know is full of great things, and those set forth with as great and magnificent Expressions. The Rhetoric and Style of Scripture runs incomparably high, beyond that of any other Writings, in whatever it treats of. But there are three things more especially, in the description of which the Holy Spirit seems to *Labour*, and be at a *Stand* for *Expression*. And these are the *Glories of Heaven*, the *Miseries of Hell*, and the *Love of Christ* to his *Church*. These the Scripture represents under all the variety of Symbols, Figures and Images that can

be supplied either from the *Intellectual* or *Material* World ; that so what is wanting in each single Representation, might be made up from the Multitude and Combination of them, that if one should miss, another might strike us, to make, if possible, some impression of so strange and so concerning Truths upon the Minds of Men.

But the last of these, as 'tis most wonderful and mysterious (it being a greater Wonder that God should Love Man, than that either there should be so much Happiness in the Enjoyment of God , or so much misery in the Loss of him) so is it more *frequently inculcated*, and more *strongly represented*. So frequently inculcated is it, that were it not for the *Mystery* of the *thing*, and that there is no *Tautology* in *Love*, The Scripture would seem Chargeable with *vain Repetitions*. Every Page almost in Holy Writ breaths forth this *Mystery* of *Divine Love*; and besides that, there

is one whole Book particularly imploy'd in the representation of it, by all the Flowers and Delicacies of the most exalted Poetry; it may be said of the whole Sacred Volume, that 'tis but one continued Expression of Love from Christ to his Church, one *Larger Canticles*.

And as 'tis thus frequently inculcated, so is it no less strongly represented. 'Tis represented by that which is the most proper Effect, and the last End and Accomplishment of all Love, by Union. For there are three most admirable Unions proposed to our Faith in the Christian Religion. The Unity of Eslence in the Trinity, the Unity of Person in Jesus Christ, and the Union that is between Christ and his Church. The first of these is an Example and Prefiguration as it were to the Second, and the Second to the Third. For we cannot better represent the Union of Christ with his Church, than by the *Hy-*

O 3 *postatic*

*postatic Union, or the Union of the  
λόγος with Human Nature.*

For First, as in this Mystery the Plurality of Nature is consistent with the Unity of Person, so does Love effect the same Miracle in the Union between Christ and his Church. For here also we meet with a new *Theanthropy*, a strange Composition of God and Man, two vastly different Substances, which without Confusion of either *Natures* or *Properties*, make up one and the same *Body*. For if Christ be *Head* of the Church, he is also one Body with it. And so St. *Austin*, *Totus Christus secundum Ecclesiam & Caput & Corpus est.*

Again, as in the Mystery of the Hypostatic Union there is a Communication of Idioms or Properties whereby what primarily and abstractly belongs to one, may secondarily and concretely be attributed to the other, as that God is Man, and Man is God, so has Love introduced the like Communication

nication between Christ and his Church, which may be said to be happy and glorified in Christ, as he is said to suffer in his Church.

Again, as in the Mystery of the Hypostatic Union, the *Word* uniting it self to Human Nature adorn'd and exalted it, not only by the Priviledge of so sacred a Confederacy, but also with many distinct Graces and Excellencies, whereby it was necessarily tho not forcibly determin'd to love the Divinity, and highly fitted to be loved by it, so is it also in this Union between Christ and his Church. He has not only ennobled her by so sacred an Alliance; but is ever conferring upon her his Gifts and Graces, and will never cease to do so, till at length he present her to himself a Glorious Church, without spot or blemish, and make her in some measure worthy of so great a Love, and so intimate an Union. For 'tis observable, that in Scripture Jesus Christ is set out as the Author and

Ephes. 5.

27.

Dispencer of all Grace, to him is ascribed the Work of the *Second* as well as of the *First* Creation, from his fulness we all receive, and the Apostle says expressly; that *to every* Ephes. 4.7. *one of us is given Grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*

But not to pursue this *Metaphysical Parallel* any further, let us return to consider this Union, as 'tis represented in Holy Scripture. Now there are but two sorts of Union in the World, *Natural* and *Moral*. And the Holy Spirit has made Choice of the Closest of each, whereby to *Figure* out to us the Union between Christ and his Church. The closest of Natural Unions is that between the *Head* and the *Body*; and the closest of all Moral Unions is that between the *Husband* and the *Wife*. And both these are by the Holy Spirit applied to this Mystery.

Thus is Christ oftentimes call'd the *Head* of the Church, and the Church the *Body* of Christ. Thus again

again is he styled the *Bridegroom*, and the Church honour'd with the Name of his *Spouse*. And because this *Latter Figure* carries in it more of sensible endearment, therefore is it of more frequent use, and withal of more *Ancient Date*. For besides that *Adam* first open'd this *Mystery*, and by his Miraculous Marriage typified to us that of Christ with his Church, which came out of the Wounded Side of our Lord, as *Eve* was taken out of *Adam's*; the Prophets have also given our Lord the Title of *Bridegroom* in the Old Testament. The 45th *Psalm* is a plain Spiritual *Epithalamium*, and so is the whole Book of Canticles, and the Holy Baptist, in whom both Types and Prophecie expire, calls him expressly by the Name of *Bridegroom*.

Strange Miracle of *Humility* and *Love*! That ever God should come down to seek a Spouse upon Earth! Was it not enough, O Blessed Jesu, that thou wast one with the

the Father and Holy Spirit, in the Eternal Trinity? Was it not enough that thou hadst *made* thy self one with our Mortal Flesh, by assuming our Nature, but that thou must yet heap Mystery upon Mystery, and as if thou wert not yet near enough allied to us, must also make thy self one with thy *Church*? But such is thy *Love* to Man, as not to be contented with *one* single Union with him? And so great thy *Condescension*, as if thou need'st a *Partner*, to compleat thy Happiness, and as if it were no more good for the *second*, than 'twas for the *first Adam* to be *alone*.

These are the two Principal *Figures*, under which the Scripture Pictures out to us the Love of Christ to his *Church*, and his Union with it. Not that they rise up to the heighth of the Mystery, but because they come the nearest of any to it. For indeed they fall vastly short, and give but a faint shadowy resemblance of what they are

are intended to represent. And therefore as we have hitherto represented the dearness between Christ and his Church, by that between the *Head* and the *Members*, and the *Husband* and *Wife*, so we may, and with better reason, *invert* the Order, and propose the *Former* as an Example and Measure for both the *Latter*. And 'tis observable that St. Paul does so: For, says he, *Husbands love your Wives, even as Christ loved the Church.* And again, *No Man ever yet hated his own Flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the Church.* Where you see the Love of Christ to his Church is not, as before, set out by that of Married Persons, and that of a Man to his own Flesh, but these are set out and illustrated by the other. So great and transcending all Love; yea, even all Knowledge, is this Love of Christ to his Church.

But 'twill appear yet greater, if we take a Prospect of it in the second

Ephes. 5.

<sup>25.</sup>

Ver. 29.

Second Light, namely in those Real and Actual Proofs whereby Christ himself has express'd this his most excellent and otherwise incredible Love. And certainly they are such as never were, will, or can be given by any other Lover. For (to make the Prospect as short as may be) was it not an amazing instance of Love for the great and ever-Blessed God, who could neither be advantaged by our Happiness, nor damaged by our Misery, to come down and assume our Nature in its meanest Circumstances, to live a needy and contemptible Life, and die a painful and execrable Death, and all this to reconcile a Rebel, to restore an Apostate? Indeed the work of Man's Redemption, if we deeply consider the whole Method and Contrivance of it, is such an Heroic Instance of Love, and so much exceeding that of his Creation, that 'tis well Man was *Created* and *Redeem'd* by the same good being, since otherwise his obligations

to

to his *Redeemer* being so much greater than those to his *Creator*, he would be very much divided and distracted in his returns of *Love* and *Gratitude*.

But let us reflect a little upon the *Life*, before we further consider the *Death* of our *Redeemer*. It was one constant Argument, one continued Miracle of *Love*. He lived as one purely *Devoted* to the good of Mankind. All his *Thoughts*, all his *Words*, all his *Actions* were *Love*. His whole business was to *Glorifie* his Father, and (which was his greatest *Glory*) to express his *Love* to Man, which tho at all times exceeding wonderful, yet toward the Evening of his *Life* it thicken'd and grew stronger, like Motion within the Neighbourhood of the Center, and as then he *Prayed*, so he *Loved* yet more earnestly. Luke 22. 44.

For 'twas then that he wept over Condemn'd *Jerusalem*, and bedew'd with Tears the Grave of *Lazarus*.

'Twas

'Twas then that with desire he desired to eat the Passover with his Disciples, instituted a perpetual Monument of *Love*, his Holy Supper, and left another of *Humility*, by condescending to wash their Feet. 'Twas then that he comforted his Disciples with the variety of the Heavenly Mansions, with a Declaration that he himself was 'the Way, the Truth and the Life, with an assurance that their Prayers in his Name should be effectual, with a Promise of the Holy Spirit, and with a Legacy of his own *Peace*, to compensate for the Tribulation they should meet with in the *World*. 'Twas then, lastly, that he recommended the state of his Apostles, together with his own Glorification, in one and the same solemn Prayer to his Father, that he would preserve them in Unity and Truth, and at length Glorifie them with the whole Body of true Believers with himself in Heaven. And all this at a time when one would have

thought

thought his own concern should have been his only *Meditation*, and Fear his only *Passion*; for now was he within view of his amazing sufferings, and the *shade* was just ready to *point* at the dreadful hour; and yet even now his Love was truly stronger than Death, and the Care of his Disciples prevailed over the Horrors of his approaching Agony.

Which he further shewed, by giving up himself to a cruel and shameful Death, for the Life and Salvation of the World. A Death (to say no more of it) of such strange Sorrow and Anguish, that the very *Prospect* of it put him into a *Sweat of Blood*, and the *induring* it made him *complain* of being *deserted* of his Father. And then that his Redemption might prove *effectual*, after his Resurrection, he gives Commission to his Disciples to go and publish it with its conditions throughout the world and orders them all, as he does here

here St. Peter, to feed his Sheep. And lest the Benefit of his Death shoud be *again* frustrated for want of Power to perform the Conditions, presently after his Aseen-  
sion he sent down the Spirit of Consolation upon his Apostles, and does continually confer Grace upon, and make *Intercession* for his Church. So tenderly affected was he toward this his Spouse, that even the felicities of Heaven could not make him forget her, as he further shew'd by complaining in behalf of his Church, when from the midst of his Glory he said, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Which words shew him as much concern'd for the Wounds given to his *Mystical*, as for those he felt in his *Natural* Body.

And now since the Love of our Lord to his Church is so exceeding great, it certainly concerns all Christians, especially those whom he has intrusted with the care of his Church, to be alike minded.

Which

Which leads me in the second place, to consider the Command here given, and to shew the great Obligation that lies upon all spiritual Pastors, to feed this Flock of Christ, which is so nearly beloved by him.

*Feed my Sheep*, says our Lord to St. Peter, and in him to all the Pastors of the Christian Church, who are equally concerned both in the *Command* and in the *Duty*.

And that they are so, is already sufficiently concluded from what has been discoursed concerning the great Love of Christ to his Church. To make you therefore more sensible of this Duty, I need only propose to your Meditation " how affectionately our Lord " loves his Church, and how dear " her Interests are to him, that out " of this his abundant Love, he has " set apart a distinct Order of Men " on this very purpose, to promote " and further her in the way of " Salvation ; that he has intrusted

P "the

" the care of her in their hands,  
 " and has made them his Vice-  
 " gerents and Trustees ; that 'tis  
 " a Charge worthy their greatest  
 " Care, for which there needs no  
 " other Argument, than that 'tis  
 " committed to them, by him who  
 " knows the worth of Souls ; that  
 " he strictly commands them, as  
 " they have any Love or Regard  
 " for him, to feed his Sheep ; that  
 " 'twas the very last Command  
 " that he gave them, when he was  
 " just leaving the World, and upon  
 " the very Confines of Glorificati-  
 " on ; and that lastly, as this is the  
 " greatest Trust that was ever by  
 " God reposed in Men, so there  
 " will be the severest account taken  
 " of it at the last day, at the Great  
 " *Visitation of the Bishop of Souls.*

This is enough, if duly weighed,  
 to shew the Obligation of this  
 Command, and to conclude this  
 part, were it not necessary to add  
 something concerning the manner  
 of discharging it. *Feed my Sheep,*  
 is

is the Command given by Christ to the Pastors of his Church, and we have seen the obligation of it: But how are they to Feed them ? I answer, First, by *Prayer* for their respective Charges both in Public and in Private. This is the First thing belonging to the Pastoral Office, and accordingly with this St. *Paul* begins his Admonition to his Son *Timothy*, *I exhort therefore that first of all, Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions and giving Thanks be made for all Men.*

<sup>1</sup> Tim. 2.1.

Secondly, by *Preaching*, with private Instruction and Admonition, as occasion shall serve and require. And here their first care should be to Preach nothing but what is *True*. Secondly, to confine their Discourses to *Useful Truths*, such as tend to the promotion of good Life, that which the Apostle calls *the Truth which is after Godliness*. Thirdly, to deliver only *Plain Truths*. For there are many Truths which are highly useful, and have a very Practical aspect when

<sup>1</sup> Titus

P 2                    they

they are once understood, which are not so easie and obvious to be so. These therefore ought as much to be waved as those which are not useful, because tho' useful, *simply speaking*, yet *respectively* they are not. And upon these two latter accounts we should not trouble our Unlearned Auditories, either with Thorny Questions and Knotty Controversies which in themselves have no Practical Use, or with more refined Theories and School Niceties, which to them are as useless and unpractical as the other. To Feed them with the *Former*, would be to give them *Stones* instead of *Bread*; And to Feed them with the *Latter*, would be like placing a Man in the Region of *pure Ether*; why, he can't *breath* in it, and will starve by reason of the *over-fineness* of his Diet.

Nor is it enough that the Truths we Preach be *Useful* and *Plain*, unless in the Fourth place they be deliver'd in a Plain and Intelligible Manner. For what signifies it that

that the things are in *themselves* Plain, if we make them obscure in our *expressing* them ; we are all ready enough to laugh at the Poor *Frier* for going about to Preach the Gospel to *Beasts* and *Trees* ; and are not they alike ridiculous, that order Discourses so as not to be understood by those that hear them ? Don't these also Preach to *Beasts* and *Trees* ? We ought therefore to consult the *Capacity* of our Hearers, and consider to *whom*, as well as *what* we speak.

And to this Plainness of Expression we would do well to joyn some degrees of *Warmth* and *Concernedness*. And this I rather recommend, because there are some that affect a cold, dead, careless and heartless way of Delivery. But certainly this has as little *Decorum* in it as it has of *Devotion*. For since the things we speak are supposed not only to be *Truths*, but *Concerning* and *Important Truths*, what can be more absurd, than to see a Man deliver

a Sermon as drily and indifferently  
 as one would read a *Mathematical  
 Lecture?* 'Tis said of *John the  
 Baptist*, that he was a *Burning*, as  
 John 5.35. well as a *Shining Light*. And truly  
 we have need of such in this *Cold  
 Frozen Age*. Plain Sermons, Preach-  
 ed with *Warmth* and *Affection*,  
 do more than the Best, *Coldly* de-  
 liver'd. You know the Story in  
*Ensebius*, of the Heathen Philoso-  
 pher coming into the Council of  
*Nice*, who was baffled into *Chris-  
 tianity* by the meer *Warmth* and  
*Heartiness* wherewith the good  
 Old Man address'd him. He could  
 have resisted his Arguments, but not  
 the *Spirit* and *Zeal* wherewith he  
 spake. And this is all I shall think  
 proper to remark to you upon the  
 Preaching part.

The next way whereby the Pa-  
 stors of the Church are to Feed the  
 Sheep of Christ, is by duly Admi-  
 nistring to them the *Holy Sacrament*,  
 which is their true Spiritual Food,  
 the *Manna* that must sustain them

in this *Wilderness*. This is the most proper way of Feeding them, for the Body of Christ is Meat indeed, and his Blood is Drink indeed.

There remains yet one way more of Feeding the Flock of Christ, without which the rest will signify but little, and that is by a *good Example*. Among the other Properties of a good Shepherd, our Saviour reckons this as one, that *he goes before his Sheep*, and leads them by his *Steps*, as well as John 10.4. with his Voice. There ought to be a Connexion between *Hear* and *Do*, but much more between *Preach* and *Do*. And he that is not careful of this, as he cannot expect to do much good to others, so he will certainly *Condemn* himself. To be short (for I hope I need not inlarge, speaking to Wise Men) a good Preacher, who is an ill Liver, is such a *Monster* as cannot be Match'd in All *Africa*. And for his State hereafter, I may leave it to be consider'd how great a Condemnation

awaits him, whom not only the *Book of God*, and of *Conscience*, but even his *own Sermons* shall Judge at the last Day.

These are the several ways of discharging this Precept, *Feed my Sheep*; to which however I think it necessary to add one thing more, and that is that we Feed them *ourselves*, and not by *Proxy*, or *Deputation*. For our Lord does not say to St. Peter, do thou get some body to feed my Sheep, but do thou Feed them thy self.

For however St. Peter's *Shadow* might do *Cures* upon the *Body*, it must be his *Person* that must do good upon the *Souls* of his Charge. To speak out plainly what I intend, *Non-residency* is one of the greatest scandals of the *Reform'd*, yea of the *Christian Religion*, contrary to all *Reason* and *Justice*, as well as *Primitive Practice*. And whoever are guilty of it, plainly shew, that they are *Lovers of Ease, Honour or Profit* more than *Lovers of Christ*.

For

For certainly he that Loves Christ as he ought, will not think himself too good to feed his Sheep. Which leads me in the Third and Last place to consider the *Connexion and Dependance* that is between the *Practice* of this Command and the *Love of Christ*. Now this I briefly make out upon a double ground.

The *First Ground* is, because the *Love of Christ* will naturally ingage us to Love whatever he Loves; and consequently since his Church is so exceeding dear to him, 'twill ingage us to Love his Church; and if to Love it, then consequently to be diligent in Feeding it, that being the most proper instance of shewing our Love to it.

The *Second Ground* is, because the Person of Jesus Christ consisting of a Double Nature, God and Man, the Love of him must include the Love of his *Humanity*, as well as of his *Divinity*. If therefore we Love Christ, we Love the Human Nature as well as the Divine,

vine; and if so, then we Love Man as Man, consequently all Men; and if we Love all Men, we shall desire and endeavour their Salvation, and accordingly take care to Feed them with the *Bread of Life*.

Upon these two Grounds it plainly appears, that there is a strong Connexion between the *Loving of Christ*, and the *Feeding of his Sheep*, and that such Pastors as do not well discharge the *Latter*, have no right of pretending to the *Former*. This is the *Test* whereby both St. Peter's, and every Spiritual Pastor's Affection to our Lord must be tried, *If you Love me, Feed my Sheep.*

Let me therefore exhort you all, as you love our Lord Jesus Christ, and as you desire to be Loved and approv'd of by him, to a sincere and Conscientious Discharge of your *Pastoral Duty*, to take heed unto your selves and to all the *Flock* over which the *Holy Ghost* has made

*you*

you Overseers, to Feed the Church of God, which he has purchased with his own Blood. Let me beseech you to consider what you are, and what you should be. What you are by your Character and Profession, and what you should be in the Exercise of it, and therefore to take heed to your selves, to your Doctrin, and, above all, to your Publick Life and Conversation. For certainly it cannot be an Ordinary Measure of Religion that will serve our turn, who are concern'd not only to be Good, but Exemplary, and must Live well for others as well as for our selves ; what therefore is Perfection in others, will be but strict Duty in us. The Devotion of our Ordinary Days ought to exceed that of their Festivals ; and we should Live in as much Warmth of Religion as they Die.

Ἄνθετο πάντα παρεχόμενα σεαυτὸν Tit.2.7.  
τίποτα καλῶν ἔργων, In all things  
shewing thy self a Pattern of good  
Works: That's our Rule, we ought  
to

to be Patterns and Examples of a Holy and refined Conversation. Let your Lamps therefore be always trimm'd, and your Lights always burning, and that with such Brightness, as to *shame* those that will not be *allured* by the Glory of the Flame.

And that you may the better do all this, let me desire you all frequently and seriously to meditate upon the Excellent *Example* of the great and good Shepherd Christ Jesus, whose Life was wholly *employ'd*, and at last *laid down* for the good of his Sheep. I pray you (My Reverend Brethren) consider this, and all that has been said, that so when this great Shepherd shall return to visit his Flock, you may all give up the same Account to him, that he did to his Father, *Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost.* Amen.

John 17.  
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